S. Wale delin. J. Eastgate sculp

Printed for C. Dilly, and the rest of the Proprietors.

S. Wale delin. J. Eastgate sculp

Printed for C. Dilly, and the rest of the Proprietors.

1489.h.10.

Self-Knowledge.

A

TREATISE,

SHEWING

IN

THE NATURE AND BENEFIT

OF

That important Science,

AND

THE WAY TO ATTAIN IT.

INTERMIXED WITH

Various Reflections and Obſervations

ON

HUMAN NATURE.

BY *JOHN MASON*, A. M.

——— *e Cœlo deſcendit γνωθι σεαυτον.* JUV.

The proper Knowledge of Mankind is Man. POPE.

THE TWELFTH EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for J. RIVINGTON and Sons; C. DILLY; J. MATTHEWS, No. 18, Strand; and SCATCHERD and WHITAKER, No. 12, Ave Maria-Lane.

1791.

3 Mar. 1832
12 Apr. "

PREFACE.

THE ſubject of the enſuing Treatiſe is of great importance; and yet I do not remember to have ſeen it cultivated with that preciſion, perſpicuity, and force, with which many other moral and theological themes have been managed. And indeed it is but rarely that we find it profeſſedly and fully recommended to us, in a ſet and regular diſcourſe, either from the pulpit or the preſs. This conſideration, together with a full perſuaſion of its great and extenſive uſefulneſs, hath excited the preſent attempt, to render it more familiar to the minds of chriſtians.

Mr. Baxter, indeed, has a Treatiſe on this ſubject, intitled, *The Miſchief of Self-Ignorance, and the Benefit of Self-Acquaintance*; and I freely acknowledge ſome helps I received from him. But he hath handled it (according to his manner) in ſo lax and diffuſe a way, introducing ſo many things that are foreign from it; omitting others that properly belong to it, and ſkimming over ſome with a too ſuperficial notice, that I own I found myſelf much diſappointed in what I expected from him; and was convinced that ſomething more correct, nervous, and methodical, was wanting on this ſubject.

I am far from having the vanity to think that this, which I now offer to the public, is entirely free from thoſe faults which I have remarked in that pious and excellent author; and am ſenſible that, if I do not fall under a much heavier cenſure myſelf, it muſt be owing to the great candour of my reader; which he will be convinced

I have

I have ſome title to, if he but duly conſider the nature and extent of the ſubject. For it is almoſt impoſſible to let the thoughts run freely upon ſo copious and comprehenſive a theme, in order to do juſtice to it, without taking too large a ſcope in ſome particulars that have a cloſe connexion with it; as I fear I have done (Part I. Chap xiv.) concerning the knowledge, guard, and government of the thoughts.

But there is a great difference between a ſhort, occaſional, and uſeful digreſſion, and a wide rambling from the ſubject, by following the impulſe of a luxuriant fancy. A judicious taſte can hardly excuſe the latter, though it may be content the author ſhould gather a few flowers out of the common road, provided he ſoon returns into it again.

This brings to my mind another thing, for which I am ſure I have great reaſon to crave the reader's indulgence; and that is, the free uſe I have made of ſome of the ancient heathen writers in my marginal quotations; which, I own, looks like an oſtentation of reading, that I always abhorred. But it was converſing with thoſe authors that firſt turned my thoughts to this ſubject. And the good ſenſe I met with in moſt of their aphoriſms and ſentiments, gave me an eſteem for them; and made it difficult for me to reſiſt the temptation of tranſcribing ſeveral of them, which I thought pertinent to the matter in hand. But, after all, I am aſhamed to ſee what an old-faſhioned figure they make in the margin. However, if the reader thinks they will too much interrupt the courſe of the ſubject, he may entirely omit them; tho' by that means he will perhaps loſe the benefit of ſome of the fineſt ſentiments in the book.

I re-

PREFACE.

I remember a modern writer, I have very lately read, is grievouſly offended with Mr. Addiſon for ſo much as mentioning the name of Plato, and preſuming, in one of his Spectators, to deliver his notions of humour in a kind of allegory, after the manner of that Greek author; which he calls 'a formal method of trifling, introduced 'under a deep oſtentation of learning, which de-'ſerves the ſevereſt rebuke'†. — and perhaps a more ſevere one was never given upon ſo ſmall a provocation: from gentlemen of ſo refined and delicate a taſte, I can expect no mercy. But the public is to judge whether this be not as culpable an affectation as the contrary one, which prevailed ſo much in the laſt century.

One great view I had in mine eye when I put theſe Thoughts together, was the benefit of youth, and eſpecially thoſe of them that are ſtudents and candidates for the ſacred miniſtry; for which they will find no ſcience more immediately neceſſary (next to a good acquaintance with the word of God) than that which is recommended to them in the following Treatiſe; to which every branch of human literature is ſubordinate, and ought to be ſubſervient. For certain it is, the great end of philoſophy, both natural and moral, is to know ourſelves, and to know God. The higheſt learning is to be wiſe; and the greateſt wiſdom is to be good,—as Marcus Antoninus ſomewhere obſerves.

It has often occurred to my mind in digeſting my thoughts on this ſubject, what a pity it is that this moſt uſeful ſcience ſhould be ſo generally neglected in the modern methods of educa-

† See Introduction to an Eſſay towards fixing the True Standard of Wit, &c. page 20, 21.

tion;

tion; and that preceptors and tutors, both in public and private ſeminaries of learning, ſhould forget that the forming the manners is more neceſſary to a finiſhed education than furniſhing the minds of youth. Socrates, who made all his philoſophy ſubſervient to morality *(b)*, was of this ſentiment: and took more pains to rectify the tempers than repleniſh the underſtandings of his pupils; and looked upon all knowledge as uſeleſs ſpeculation that was not brought to this end, to make us wiſer and better men. And, without doubt, if in the academy the youth has once happily learned the great art of managing his temper, governing his paſſions, and guarding his foibles, he will find a more ſolid advantage from it in after-life, than he could expect from the beſt acquaintance with all the ſyſtems of ancient and modern philoſophy.

It was a very juſt and ſenſible anſwer which Ageſilaus, the Spartan king, returned to one who aſked him, "What it was in which youth ought principally to be inſtructed?" He replied, 'That which they have moſt need to practiſe when they are men' *(c)*. Were this ſingle rule but carefully attended to in the method of education, it might probably be conducted in a manner much more to the advantage of our youth than it ordinarily is: for, as Dr. Fuller obſerves, "That pains we take in books or arts, which treat of things remote from the uſe of life, is but a buſy idleneſs" *(d)*. And what is there in life which youth will have more frequent occaſion to practiſe than this? What is there which they afterwards more

(b) Totam philoſophiam revocavit ad mores. *Sen. Ep.* 72.
(c) See Plutarch's Laconic Apothegms, under the word *Ageſilaus*. *(d)* Rule of Life, page 82.

regret

regret the want of? What is there in which they want more direction and assistance than the right government of their passions and prejudices? And what more proper season to receive those assistances, and to lay a foundation for this difficult but very important science, than the early part of youth?

It may be said, "it is properly the office and care of parents to watch over and correct the tempers of their children in the first years of their infancy, when it may easiest be done." But if it be not done effectually then (as it very seldom is) there is the more necessity for it afterwards. But the truth is, it is the proper office and care of all who have the charge of youth, and ought to be looked upon as the most important and necessary part of education.

It was the observation of a great divine and reformer, "That he who acquires his learning at the expence of his morals, is the worse for his education" *(a)*: and we may add, That he who does not improve his temper, together with his understanding, is not much the better for it; for he ought to measure his progress in science by the improvement of his morals; and remember that he is no further a learned man than he is a wise and good man; and that he cannot be a finished philosopher till he is a christian *(b)*.

But whence is it that moral philosophy, which was so carefully cultivated in the ancient academy, should be forced in the modern to give

(a) Qui proficit in literis et deficit in moribus, non proficit sed deficit. *Oecolampadius. See Hist. of Pop.* v. ii. p. 337.

(b) Te in scientiâ profeciſſe credas quantum in moribus fueris emendatior; eo usque doctum, in quantum bonum: ita philosophum, ut christianum. *Præf. ad Nem.*

place

place to natural, that was originally deſigned to be ſubſervient to it? which is to exalt the handmaid into the place of miſtreſs (c). This appears not only a prepoſterous, but a pernicious method of inſtitution; for as the mind takes a turn of thought in future life, ſuitable to the tincture it hath received in youth, it will naturally conclude that there is no neceſſity to regard, or at leaſt to lay any ſtreſs upon what was never inculcated upon it as a matter of importance then: and ſo will grow up in a neglect or diſeſteem of thoſe things which are more neceſſary to make a perſon a wiſe and truly underſtanding man than all thoſe rudiments of ſcience he brought with him from the ſchool or college.

It is really a melancholy thing to ſee a young gentleman of ſhining parts, and a ſweet diſpoſition, who has gone through the common courſe of academical ſtudies, come out into the world under an abſolute government of his paſſions and prejudices; which have increaſed with his learning, and which, when he comes to be better acquainted with human life and human nature, he is ſoon ſenſible and aſhamed of; but perhaps is never able to conquer as long as he lives, for want of that aſſiſtance which he ought to have received in his education; for a wrong education is one of thoſe three things to which it is

(c) Things were coming to this paſs ſo early as Seneca's time; who laments that plain and open truth was turned into a dark and intricate ſcience. "Philoſophy (ſays he) is "turned into Philology; and that through the fault both of "maſters and ſcholars; the one teach to diſpute, not to "live; and the other come to them to mend their wits, not "their manners: whereas philoſophy is nothing elſe but a "rule of life. Quid autem philoſophia, niſi vita lex eſt."

owing

owing (as an ancient chriſtian and philoſopher juſtly obſerves) that ſo few have the right government of their paſſions *(h)*.

I would not be thought to depreciate any part of human literature, but ſhould be glad to ſee this moſt uſeful branch of ſcience, the knowledge of the heart, the detecting and correcting hurtful prejudices, and the right government of the temper and paſſions in more general eſteem; as neceſſary at once to form the gentleman, the ſcholar, and the chriſtian.

And if there be any thing in this ſhort Treatiſe which may be helpful to ſtudents, who have a regard to the right government of their minds, whilſt they are furniſhing them with uſeful knowledge, I would particularly recommend it to their peruſal.

I have nothing further to add, but to deſire the reader's excuſe for the freedom with which I have delivered my ſentiments in this matter, and for detaining him ſo long from his ſubject; which I now leave to his candid and ſerious thoughts, and the bleſſing of Almighty God to make it uſeful to him.

(h) Εγγινονται δε τα φαυλα παθη τη ψυχη δια τριων τουτων· δια κακης αγωγης, εξ αμαθιας υπο κακιξιας· μη αχθεινες γαρ καλως εκ παιδων ως δυνασθαι κρατειν των παθων εις την αμειριαν αυτων εμπιμπλομεν.—Bad paſſions ſpring up in the mind three ways; viz. through a bad education, great ignorance, or a diſorder in the animal frame. (1.) From a bad education: for if we have not been taught from our childhood to govern our paſſions with all poſſible care, they will ſoon come to have the government of us. *Nemeſ. de Nat. Hom. p.* 182.

PREFACE.

CONTENTS:

THE

CONTENTS.

PART I.

CHAP. I. The nature and importance of the ſubject — page 1

II. The ſeveral branches of ſelf-knowledge. We muſt know what ſort of creatures we are, and what we ſhall be — — — 11

III. The ſeveral relations in which we ſtand to God, to Chriſt, and our fellow-creatures — 20

IV. We muſt duly conſider the rank and ſtation of life in which Providence hath placed us, and what it is that becomes and adorns it — 36

V. Every man ſhould be well acquainted with his own talents and capacities; and in what manner they are to be exerciſed and improved to the greateſt advantage — — 40

VI. We muſt be well acquainted with our inabilities, and thoſe things in which we are naturally deficient, as well as thoſe in which we excel — 43

VII. Concerning the knowledge of our conſtitutional ſins — — 45

VIII. The knowledge of our moſt dangerous temptations neceſſary to ſelf-knowledge — 52

IX. Self-knowledge diſcovers the ſecret prejudices of the heart — — 56

X. The neceſſity and means of knowing our natural tempers — — — 70

XI. Concerning the ſecret ſprings of our actions — 76

XII. Every one that knows himſelf is in a particular manner ſenſible how far he is governed by a thirſt for applauſe — — 78

CHAP.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. XIII. What kind of knowledge we are already furniſhed with, and what degree of eſteem we ſet upon it — — page 83

XIV. Concerning the knowledge, guard, and government of our thoughts — — 89

XV. Concerning the memory — — 104

XVI. Concerning the mental taſte — — 108

XVII. Of our great and governing views in life — 113

XVIII. How to know the true ſtate of our ſouls; and whether we are fit to die — — 116

PART II.

Shewing the great excellence and advantage of this kind of ſcience — — — 120

I. Self-knowledge the ſpring of ſelf-poſſeſſion — 121

II. Self-knowledge leads to a wiſe and ſteady conduct 125

III. Humility the effect of ſelf-knowledge — 126

IV. Charity another effect of ſelf-knowledge — 129

V. Moderation the effect of ſelf-knowledge — 132

VI. Self-knowledge improves the judgment — 135

VII. Self-knowledge directs to the proper exerciſes of ſelf-denial — — 137

VIII. Self-knowledge promotes our uſefulneſs in the world — — 141

IX. Self-knowledge leads to a decorum and conſiſtency of character — — 144

X. Piety the effect of ſelf-knowledge — 147

XI. Self-knowledge teaches us rightly to perform the duties of religion — — 149

XII. Self-knowledge the beſt preparation for death — 151

PART

CONTENTS.

PART III.

Shewing how ſelf-knowledge is to be attained page 154

CHAP. I. Self-examination neceſſary to ſelf-knowledge — 157

II. Conſtant watchfulneſs neceſſary to ſelf-knowledge 175

III. We ſhould have ſome regard to the opinions of others concerning us, particularly our enemies 177

IV. Frequent converſe with ſuperiors a help to ſelf-knowledge — — 182

V. Of cultivating ſuch a temper as will be the beſt diſpoſition to ſelf-knowledge — — 183

VI. To be ſenſible of our falſe knowledge a good ſtep to ſelf-knowledge — — 186

VII. Self-inſpection peculiarly neceſſary upon ſome particular occaſions — — 188

VIII. To know ourſelves we muſt wholly abſtract from external appearances — — 194

IX. The practice of ſelf-knowledge a great means to promote it — — 197

X. Fervent and frequent prayer the moſt effectual means for attaining true ſelf-knowledge — 205

A TREATISE

A

TREATISE

OF

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

PART FIRST.

CHAP. I.

The Nature and Importance of the Subject.

A DESIRE of knowledge is natural to the mind of man: and nothing diſcovers the true quality and diſpoſition of the mind more, than the particular kind of knowledge it is moſt fond of.

Thus we ſee that low and little minds are moſt delighted with the knowledge of trifles; as in children: an indolent mind, with that which ſerves only for amuſement, or the entertainment of the fancy: a curious mind is beſt pleaſed with facts: a judicious penetrating mind, with demonſtration and mathematical ſcience; a worldly mind eſteems no knowledge like that of the world,

but a wiſe and pious man, before all other kinds of knowledge, prefers that of God and his own ſoul.

But ſome kind of knowledge or other the mind is continually craving after: and by conſidering what that is, its prevailing turn and temper may eaſily be known.

This deſire of knowledge, like other affections planted in our nature, will be very apt to lead us wrong, if it be not well regulated. When it is directed to improper objects, or purſued in a wrong manner, it degenerates into a vain and criminal curioſity. A fatal inſtance of this in our firſt parents we have upon ſacred record; the unhappy effects of which are but too viſible in all.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE is the ſubject of the enſuing Treatiſe.—A ſubject, which the more I think of, the more important and extenſive it appears. So important, that every branch of it ſeems abſolutely neceſſary to the right government of the life and temper; and ſo extenſive, that the nearer view we take of its ſeveral branches, more are ſtill opening to the view, as nearly connected with it as the other. Like what we find in microſcopical obſervations on natural objects: the better the glaſſes, and the nearer the ſcrutiny, the more wonders we explore; and the more ſurpriſing diſcoveries we make of certain properties, parts,

or

or affections belonging to them, which were never before thought of. For, in order to a true ſelf-knowledge, the human mind, with its various powers and operations, muſt be narrowly inſpected; all its ſecret bendings and doublings diſplayed; otherwiſe our ſelf-acquaintance will be but very partial and defective; and the heart after all will deceive us. So that, in treating this ſubject, there is no ſmall danger, either of doing injury to it, by ſlight and ſuperficial inqueſt on the one hand, or of running into a reſearch too minute and philoſophical for common uſe on the other. The two extremes I ſhall keep in my eye, and endeavour to ſteer a middle courſe between them.

Know thyſelf, is one of the moſt uſeful and comprehenſive precepts in the whole moral ſyſtem: And it is well known in how great a veneration this maxim was held by the ancients; and in how high eſteem the duty of ſelf-examination, as neceſſary to it. Thales, the Mileſian, is ſaid to be the firſt author of it *(a)*; who uſed to ſay, that, *for a man to know himſelf, is the hardeſt thing in the world (b)*. It was afterwards adopted by Chylon the Lacedemonian; and is one of thoſe three precepts which Pliny affirms to have been

(a) He was the prince of the philoſophers, and flouriſhed about *A. M.* 3330; and was contemporary with Joſiah king of Judah. *(b)* See Stanley's Life of Thales.

conſecrated at Delphos in golden letters. It was afterwards greatly admired, and frequently uſed by others *(c)*; till at length it acquired the authority of a divine oracle; and was ſuppoſed to have been given originally by Apollo himſelf. Of which general opinion Cicero gives us this reaſon; "becauſe it hath ſuch a weight of ſenſe "and wiſdom in it, as appears too great to be at-"tributed to any man *(d)*." And this opinion, of its coming originally from Apollo himſelf, perhaps was the reaſon that it was written in

(c) Reſpue quod non es: tollat ſua munera Cerdo.
Tecum habita: noris quam ſit tibi curta ſupellex.
Perſ. Sat. 4.
——— nec te quæſiveris extra. *Id. Sat.* 1.
——— te conſule, dic tibi quis ſis. *Juv. Sat.* 11.
Teipſum concute. *Hor.* lib. 1. *Sat.* 3
Bellum eſt enim ſua vitia noſſe. *Cic. Epiſt. ad Atticum*, lib. 2.
Illud (γνωθι σεαυτον) noli putare ad arrogantiam minuendam ſolùm eſſe dictum, verùm etiam ut bona noſtra norimus. *Id. Epiſt. ad Mar. & Fratrem*, lib. 3. Epiſt. 6.
Id enim maximè quemque decet quod eſt cujuſque ſuum maximè. Quiſque igitur noſcat Ingenium acremque ſe et bonorum et vitiorum ſuorum Judicem præbeat. *Id De Offic.*
Intrandum eſt igitur in rerum naturam, et penitus; quid ea poſtulat pervidendum; aliter enim noſmet ipſos noſſe non poſſumus. *Id de Finibus.* lib. 5.

(d) Hæc enim (*i. e.* Philoſophia) nos cùm cæteras res omnes tum quod eſt difficilimum, docuit; ut [NOSMET IPSOS] noſceremus. Cujus Præcepti tanta vis, tanta ſententia eſt, ut ea non Homini cuipiam, ſed Delphico Deo tribueretur. *Cicero De Legib.* lib. 1.
Quod præceptum quia majus erat quam ut ab Homini videretur, idcirco aſſignatum eſt Deo: Jubet igitur nos Pythius Apollo, noſcere [NOSMET IPSOS.] *Idem de Finibus*, lib. 5. cap. 16.

golden

golden capitals over the door of his temple at Delphos.

And why this excellent precept ſhould not be held in as high eſteem in the chriſtian world as it was in the heathen, is hard to conceive. Human nature is the ſame now as it was then: the heart as deceitful; and the neceſſity of watching, knowing, and keeping it, the ſame. Nor are we leſs aſſured that this precept is divine. Nay, we have a much greater aſſurance of this than the heathens had; they ſuppoſed it came down from heaven, we know it did; what they conjectured, we are ſure of. For this ſacred oracle is dictated to us in a manifold light, and explained to us in various views by the holy ſpirit, in that revelation which God hath been pleaſed to give us as our guide to duty and happineſs; by which, *as in a glaſs*, we may ſurvey ourſelves, and know *what manner of perſons we are* *.

This diſcovers ourſelves to us; pierces into the inmoſt receſſes of the mind; ſtrips off every diſguiſe; lays open the inward part; makes a ſtrict ſcrutiny into the very ſoul and ſpirit; and critically judges of the thoughts and intents of the

Et nimirum hanc habet vim præceptum Apollinis, quo monet ut ſe quiſque noſcat—Hunc igitur noſſe (*i. e.* animum) niſi divinum eſſet, non eſſet hoc acrioris cujuſdam animi præceptum, ſic, ut tributum Deo ſit: hoc eſt ſeipſum poſſe cognoſcere. *Idem Tuſcul. Quæſt.* lib. 5.

* James i. 23.

heart (e). It ſhows us with what exactneſs and care we are to ſearch and try our ſpirits, examine ourſelves, and watch our ways, and keep our hearts, in order to acquire this important ſelf-ſcience; which it often calls us to do:—*Examine yourſelves,—prove your ownſelves; know you not yourſelves* (f)? *Let a man examine himſelf* *, Our Saviour upbraids his diſciples with their ſelf-ignorance, in not knowing *what manner of ſpirit they were of* †. And, ſaith the Apoſtle, *If a man* (through ſelf-ignorance) *thinketh himſelf to be ſomething when he is nothing, he deceiveth himſelf. But let every man prove his work, and then ſhall he have rejoicing in himſelf, and not in another* ‡. Here we are commanded, inſtead of judging others, to judge ourſelves; and to avoid the inexcuſable raſhneſs of condemning others for the very crimes

(e) Και κριτικος ενθυμησεων και ενοιων καρδιας. Heb. iv. 12.

(f) Εαυτους δοκιμαζετε. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. — Tho' δοκιμαζω ſignifies to *approve*, as well as to *prove*; yet that our tranſlators have hit upon the true ſenſe of the word here, in rendering it *prove yourſelves*, is apparent, not only from the word immediately preceding (εαυτους πειραζετε) which is of the ſame import, but becauſe ſelf-probation is always neceſſary to a right ſelf-approbation.

" Every chriſtian ought to try himſelf, and may know himſelf, if he be faithful in examining. The frequent exhortations of ſcripture hereunto imply both theſe, viz. that the knowledge of ourſelves is attainable, and that we ſhould endeavour after it. Why ſhould the apoſtle put them upon examining and proving themſelves, unleſs it was poſſible to know themſelves upon ſuch trying and proving?" — *Bennet's Chriſt. Oratory*, p. 568.

* 1 Cor. xi. 28. † Luke ix. 55. ‡ Gal. vi. 3, 4.

wo

we ourſelves are guilty of, Rom. ii. 1, 21, 22.; which a ſelf-ignorant man is very apt to do; nay, to be more offended at a ſmall blemiſh in another's character, than at a greater in his own; which folly, ſelf-ignorance, and hypocriſy, our Saviour, with juſt ſeverity, animadverts upon, Matt. vii. 3—5.

And what ſtreſs was laid upon this, under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, appears ſufficiently from thoſe expreſſions: *Keep thy heart with all diligence*. Commune with your own heart†. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts‡. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart||. Let us ſearch and try our ways§. Recollect, recollect yourſelves, O nation not deſired** (g).*—And all this as neceſſary to that ſelf-acquaintance which is the only proper baſis of ſolid peace (*b*).

* Prov. iv. 23. † Pſal. iv. 4. ‡ Pſal. cxxxix. 23.
|| Pſal. xxvi. 2. § Lam. iii. 4. ** Zeph. ii. 1.

(*g*) The verb properly ſignifies *to glean* or gather together ſcattered ſticks or ſtraws; as appears from all the places where the word is uſed in the Old Teſtament (Exod. v. 7, 12. Num. xv. 32. 1 Kings xvii. 13.) Hence, by an eaſy metaphor, it ſignifies *to recollect*, or gather the ſcattered thoughts together; and ought to be ſo rendered, when uſed in the reflective form, as here it is. So ſaith R. Kimchi, eſt propriè ſtipulas colligere. Id ſit accuratâ ſcrutatione hanc dicitur de qualibet Inquiſitione.—Whence I think it is evident that the word ſhould be rendered as above.

(*h*) Clement Alexandrinus ſaith, that Moſes, by that phraſe ſo common in his writings, *Take heed to thyſelf* (Exod. x. 28. xxxiv. 12. Deut. iv. 9.) means the ſame thing as the ancients did their γνῶθι σεαυτὸν. *Strom.* lib. 2. cap. 5.

Were mankind but more generally convinced of the importance and neceſſity of this ſelf-knowledge, and poſſeſſed with a due eſteem for it; did they but know the true way to attain it; and under a proper ſenſe of its excellence, and the fatal effects of ſelf-ignorance, did they but make it their buſineſs and ſtudy every day to cultivate it; how ſoon ſhould we find a happy alteration in the manners and ſpirits of men!—— But the miſery of it is, men will not think; will not employ their thoughts, in good earneſt, about the things which moſt of all deſerve and demand them. By which unaccountable indolence, and averſion to ſelf-reflection, they are led blindfold and inſenſibly into the moſt dangerous paths of infidelity and wickedneſs, as the Jews were heretofore; of whoſe amazing ingratitude and apoſtacy God himſelf aſſigns this ſignal cauſe: * *My people do not conſider (i).*

Self-knowledge is that acquaintance with ourſelves, which ſhews us what we are, and do, and ought to be, in order to our living comfortably and uſefully here and happily hereafter. The means of it is ſelf-examination; the end of

* Iſai. i. 3.

(i) "There is nothing men are more deficient in than "knowing their own characters. I know not how this ſci-"ence comes to be ſo much neglected. We ſpend a great "deal of time in learning uſeleſs things, but take no pains "in the ſtudy of ourſelves, and in opening the folds and "doubles of the heart." *Reflections on Ridicule*, page 61.

it

it is ſelf-government and ſelf-fruition.—It principally conſiſts in the knowledge of our ſouls; which is attained by a particular attention to their various powers, capacities, paſſions, inclinations, operations, ſtate, happineſs, and temper. For a man's ſoul is properly himſelf, *Mat.* xvi. 26. compared with *Luke* ix. 25. *(k)*. The body is but the houſe; the ſoul is the tenant that inhabits it; the body is the inſtrument; the ſoul the artiſt that directs it *(l)*.

This ſcience, which is to be the ſubject of the enſuing Treatiſe, hath theſe three peculiar properties in it, which diſtinguiſh it from, and render it preferable to all other.—(1.) It is equally attainable by all. It requires no ſtrength of me-

(k) Præceptum Apollinis quo monet, ut ſe quiſque noſcat, non enim, credo, id præcipit; ut membra noſtra aut ſtaturam figuramque noſcamus: neque nos corpora ſumus: neque ego, tibi dicens hoc, corpori tuo dico: cum igitur NOSCE TE dicit, hoc dicit, Noſce animum tuum. Nam corpus quidem quaſi vas eſt, aut aliquod animi receptaculum; ab animo tuo quicquid agitur id agitur a te. *Cic. Tuſcul. Quæſt.* lib. 1.

(l) 2 Cor. v. 1. Rom. vi. 13.—η δυναμις ψυχης, το δε οργανοι σωματος. *Nemeſ. de Nat. Hom.* cap. 6.

Μηδεποτε συμπεριφαινεσθω τον περικειμενον αγγειωδες και τα οργανια ταυτα τα περιπεπλασμενα, ομοια γαρ εστι σκεπαριω, μονοι δε διαφεροντα, καθοτι προσφυη εστιν. *Mar. Anton.* lib. x. § 31. —When you talk of a man, I would not have you tack fleſh and blood to the notion, nor thoſe limbs neither which are made out of it; theſe are but tools for the ſoul to work with: and no more part of a man, than an axe or a plane is a piece of a carpenter. It is true, nature hath glewed them together, and they grow as it were to the ſoul; and there is al the difference. *Collier.*

mory, no force of genius, no depth of penetration, as many other ſciences do, to come at a tolerable degree of acquaintance with them; which therefore renders them inacceſſible by the greateſt part of mankind. Nor is it plac'd out of their reach, thro' a want of opportunity, and proper aſſiſtance and direction how to acquire it, as many other parts of learning are. Every one of a common capacity hath the opportunity and ability to attain it, if he will but recollect his rambling thoughts, turn them in upon himſelf, watch the motions of his heart, and compare them with this rule.—(2.) It is of equal importance to all; and of the higheſt importance to every one *(m)*. Other ſciences are ſuited to the various conditions of life: ſome, more neceſſary to ſome; other, to others. But this equally concerns every one that hath an immortal ſoul, whoſe final happineſs he deſires and ſeeks.--(3.) Other knowledge is very apt to make a man vain; this always keeps him humble. Nay, it is for want of this knowledge that men are vain of that they have. *Knowledge puffeth up* †. A ſmall degree of knowledge often hath this effect on weak minds: and the reaſon why greater attainments in it have not

(m) 'Tis virtue only makes our bliſs below;
And all our knowledge is OURSELVES TO KNOW.
Pope's Eſſay on Man.

† 1 *Cor.* viii. 1.

ſo

ſo generally the ſame effect is, becauſe they open and enlarge the views of the mind ſo far, as to let into it at the ſame time a good degree of Self-Knowledge. For the more true knowledge a man hath, the more ſenſible he is of the want of it; which keeps him humble.

And now, reader, whoever thou art, whatever be thy character, ſtation, or diſtinction in life, if thou art afraid to look into thine heart, and haſt no inclination to ſelf-acquaintance, read no further: lay aſide this book; for thou wilt find nothing here that will flatter thy ſelf-eſteem; but perhaps ſomething that may abate it. But if thou art deſirous to cultivate this important kind of knowledge, and to live no longer a ſtranger to thyſelf, proceed; and keep thy eye open to thine own image, with whatever unexpected deformity it may preſent itſelf to thee; and patiently attend, whilſt, by divine aſſiſtance, I endeavour to lay open thine own heart to thee, and lead thee to the true knowledge of thyſelf in the following chapters.

CHAP. II.

The ſeveral Branches of Self-Knowledge. We muſt know what Sort of Creatures we are, and what we ſhall be.

THAT we may have a more diſtinct and orderly view of this ſubject, I ſhall here conſider the ſeveral branches of Self-Knowledge; or

or ſome of the chief particulars wherein it conſiſts: Whereby perhaps it will appear to be a more copious and comprehenſive ſcience than we imagine. And,

(1.) To know ourſelves, is to know and ſeriouſly conſider what ſort of creatures we are, and what we ſhall be.

(1.) What we are.

Man is a complex being, τριμερης υποστασις, a tripartite perſon; or a compound creature made up of three diſtinct parts, viz. the Body, which is the earthly or mortal part of him; the Soul, which is the animal or ſenſitive part; and the Spirit or Mind, which is the rational and immortal part *(a)*.—Each of theſe three parts have their

(a) This doctrine, I think, is eſtabliſhed beyond all diſpute, not only by experience, but by authority. It was received by almoſt all the ancient philoſophers. The Pythagoreans; as we learn from Jamblicus, vid. Protrept. p. 34, 35. The Platoniſts; as appears from Nemeſius, Salluſt, and Laertius, vid. Di. Laertius, lib. 3. p. 219. The Stoics; as appears from Antoninus, who ſaith expreſly, "There are three "things which belong to a man; the body, the ſoul, and the "mind. And as to the properties of the diviſion, ſenſation "belongs to the body, appetite to the ſoul, and reaſon to the "mind," "σωμα, ψυχη, νους, σωματος αισθησεις, ψυχης ορμαι, νυ δογματα. lib. 3. § 16. lib. 2. § 2. lib. 12. § 3.—It appears alſo to have been the opinion of moſt of the fathers, vid. Irenæus, lib. 5. cap. 9. lib. 2. cap. 33. Ed. Par. Clem. Alex. Strom. 3. p. 542. Ed. Oxon. Origen. Philocal. p. 8. Ignat. Ep. ad Philadelph. ad calcem. See alſo Joſeph. Antiq. lib. 1. cap. 2. p. 5. Conſtitut. Apoſtol. lib. 7. cap. 34.—But above all theſe, is the authority of Scripture, which, ſpeaking of the original formation

their respective offices assigned them: and a man then acts becoming himself, when he keeps them duly employed in their proper functions, and preserves their natural subordination.—But it is not enough to know this merely as a point of speculation; we must pursue and revolve the thought, and urge the consideration to all the purposes of a practical self-acquaintance.

We are not all body, nor mere animal creatures. We find we have a more noble nature than the inanimate, or brutal part of the creation. We can not only move and act freely, but

formation of man, mentions the three distinct parts of his nature; Gen. ii. 7. viz. *the dust of the earth*, or the body; *the living soul*, or the animal and sensitive part; and *the breath of life*, i. e. the spirit or rational mind. In like manner the apostle Paul divides the whole man into (το πνευμα, η ψυχη, και το σωμα) the spirit, the soul, and the body, 1 Thess. v. 23. and what he calls πνεῦμα here, he calls νῦς, Rom. vii. 24. the word which Antoninus uses to denote the same thing.—They who would see more of this, may consult Nemesius de Naturâ Hominis, cap. 1. and Whiston's Prim. Christ. vol. 4. p. 262.

All the observations I shall make hereupon is, that this consideration may serve to soften the prejudices of some against the account which Scripture gives us of the mysterious manner of the existence of the divine nature; of which every man (as *created in the image of God*) carries about him a kind of emblem, in the threefold distinction of his own; which, if he did not every minute find it by experience to be a fact, would doubtless appear to him altogether as mysterious and incomprehensible as the Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity.

"Homo habet tres partes, spiritum, animam, et corpus; "itaque homo est imago S. S. Trinitatis." *August. Tractat. de Symbolo.*

we

we obſerve in ourſelves a capacity of reflection, ſtudy, and forecaſt; and various mental operations, which irrational animals diſcover no ſymptoms of. Our ſouls therefore muſt be of a more excellent nature than theirs; and from the power of thought with which they are endowed, they are proved to be immaterial ſubſtances; and conſequently in their own nature capable of immortality: and that they are actually immortal, or will never die, the ſacred Scriptures do abundantly teſtify *(b)*.—Let us then hereupon ſeriouſly recollect ourſelves in the following ſoliloquy.

'O my ſoul, look back but a few years, and 'thou waſt nothing!——And how didſt thou 'ſpring out of that nothing?—Thou couldſt not 'make thyſelf. That is quite impoſſible.—Moſt 'certain it is, that *that* almighty, ſelf-exiſtent 'and eternal Power, which made the world,

(b) As nature delights in the moſt eaſy tranſitions from one claſs of beings to another, and as the *nexus utriuſque generis* is obſervable in ſeveral creatures of ambiguous nature, which ſeem to connect the lifeleſs and vegetable, the vegetable and animal, the animal and rational worlds together; (See Nemeſius de Nat. Hom. cap. 1. p 6.) why may not the ſouls of brutes be conſidered as the *nexus* between material and immaterial ſubſtances, or matter and ſpirit, or ſomething between both? The great diſſimilitude of nature in theſe two ſubſtances, I apprehend, can be no ſolid objection to this hypotheſis, if we conſider (beſide our own ignorance of the nature of ſpirits) but how nearly they approach in other inſtances, and how cloſely they are united in man.

'made

'made thee alſo out of nothing; called thee 'into being when thou waſt not; gave thee 'theſe reaſoning and reflecting faculties, which 'thou art now emloying in ſearching out the 'end and happineſs of thy nature.—It was He, 'O my ſoul, that made thee intelligent and im-'mortal. It was He that placed thee in this 'body, as in a priſon; where thy capacities are 'cramped, thy deſires debaſed, and thy liberty 'loſt.—It was He that ſent thee into this world, 'which by all circumſtances appears to be a 'ſtate of ſhort diſcipline and trial. And where-'fore did He place thee here, when he might 'have made thee a more free, unconfined, and 'happy ſpirit?—But check that thought;—it 'looks like a too preſumptuous curioſity. A 'more needful and important enquiry is, What 'did He place thee here for? And what doth 'He expect from thee whilſt thou art here?—'What part hath He allotted me to act on the 'ſtage of human life; where He, angels and 'men, are ſpectators of my behaviour? The 'part He hath given me to act here is, doubt-'leſs, a very important one; becauſe it is for 'eternity *(c)*. And what is it, but to live up to 'the

(c) It is ſaid when the prince of the Latin poets was aſked by his friend, why he ſtudied ſo much accuracy in the plan of his

'the dignity of my rational and intellectual nature; and as becomes a creature born for immortality?

'And tell me, O my ſoul (for as I am now 'about to cultivate a better acquaintance with 'thee, to whom I have been too long a ſtranger, 'I muſt try thee, and put many a cloſe queſtion 'to thee) tell me, I ſay, whilſt thou confineſt 'thy deſires to ſenſual gratifications, wherein 'doſt thou differ from the beaſts that periſh? 'Captivated by bodily appetites, doſt thou not 'act beneath thyſelf? Doſt thou not put thyſelf 'upon a level with the lower claſs of beings, 'which were made to ſerve thee, offer an indignity to thyſelf, and deſpiſe the work of thy 'Maker's hands? O remember thy heavenly 'extract; remember thou art a ſpirit. Check 'then the ſolicitations of the fleſh; and dare to 'do nothing that may diminiſh thy native excellence, diſhonour thy high original, or degrade thy noble nature *(d)*.—But let me ſtill 'urge

his poem, the propriety of his characters, and the purity of his diction; he replied, In æternum pingo, *I am writing for eternity*. What more weighty conſideration to juſtify and inforce the utmoſt vigilance and circumſpection of life, than this; In æternum vivo, *I am living for eternity?*

(d) Major ſum et ad majora natus, quam quod ſim corporis mancipium. Quod equidem non aliter aſpicio quam vinculum libertati meæ circumdatum. *Sen. Ep.* 66.

"I am

'urge it. Conſider, I ſay, O my ſoul, that thou 'art an immortal ſpirit. Thy body dies; but 'thou, *thou* muſt live for ever, and thine eter-'nity will take its tincture from the manner of 'thy behaviour, and the habits thou contracteſt, 'during this thy ſhort co-partnerſhip with fleſh 'and blood. O! do nothing now, but what 'thou mayeſt with pleaſure look back upon a 'million of ages hence. For know, O my ſoul, 'that thy ſelf-conſciouſneſs and reflecting fa-'culties will not leave thee with thy body; but 'will follow thee after death, and be the inſtru-'ment of unſpeakable pleaſure or torment to 'thee in that ſeparate ſtate of exiſtence *(e)*.'

(2.) In order to a full acquaintance with our-ſelves, we muſt endeavour to know not only what we are, but what we ſhall be.

And O! what different creatures ſhall we ſoon be, from what we now are! Let us look forwards

"I am too noble, and of too high a birth", ſaith that excellent moraliſt, "to be a ſlave to my body; which I look upon only as a chain thrown upon the liberty of my ſoul."

(e) As it is not the deſign of this Treatiſe to enter into a nice and philoſophical diſquiſition concerning the nature of the human ſoul, but to awaken mens attention to the inward operations and affections of it (which is by far the moſt neceſſary part of Self-Knowledge) ſo they who would be more particularly informed concerning its nature and original, and the various opinions of the antients about it, may conſult *Nemeſ. de Nat. Hom. cap.* 1. and a Treatiſe called *The Government of the Thoughts, chap.* 1. and *Chambers's Cyclopædia*, under the word SOUL.

then,

then, and frequently glance our thoughts towards death, though they cannot penetrate the darkneſs of that paſſage, or reach the ſtate behind it. That lies veil'd from the eyes of our mind; and the great God hath not thought fit to throw ſo much light upon it, as to ſatisfy the anxious and inquiſitive deſires the ſoul hath to know it. However, let us make the beſt uſe we can of that little light which Scripture and reaſon have let in upon this dark and important ſubject.

'Compoſe thy thoughts, O my ſoul, and 'imagine how it will fare with thee, when thou 'goeſt a naked, unimbodied ſpirit, into a world, 'an unknown world of ſpirits, with all thy ſelf-'conſciouſneſs about thee, where no material 'object ſhall ſtrike thine eye; and where thy 'dear partner and companion the body cannot 'come nigh thee; but where without it thou 'wilt be ſenſible of the moſt noble ſatisfactions, 'or the moſt exquiſite pains. Embarked in 'death, thy paſſage will be dark; and the ſhore, 'on which it will land thee, altogether ſtrange 'and unknown.——*It doth not yet appear what we 'ſhall be (f).*'

That

(f) 'Thou muſt expire, my ſoul, ordain'd to range
'Thro' unexperienc'd ſcenes, and myſt'ries ſtrange;
'Dark the event, and diſmal the exchange.

'But

That revelation, which God hath been pleased to make of his will to mankind, was designed rather to fit us for the future happiness, and direct our way to it, than open to us the particular glories of it, or distinctly shew us what it is. This it hath left still very much a mystery; to check our too curious enquiries into the nature of it, and to bend our thoughts more intently to that which more concerns us, viz. an habitual preparation for it. And what that is, we cannot be ignorant, if we believe either our Bible or our reason; for both these assure us, that *that* which

'But when compell'd to leave this house of clay,
'And to an unknown somewhere wing thy way;
'When time shall be eternity, and thou
'Shalt be thou know'st not what, nor where, nor how,
'Trembling and pale, what wilt thou see or do?
'Amazing state!——No wonder that we dread
'The thoughts of death, or faces of the dead.
'His black retinue sorely strikes our mind;
'Sickness and pain before, and darkness all behind.
'Some courteous ghost, the secret then reveal;
'Tell us what you have felt, and we must feel.
'You warn us of approaching death, and why
'Will you not teach us what it is to die?
'But having shot the gulph, you love to view
'Succeeding spirits plung'd along like you;
'Nor lend a friendly hand to guide them through.
'When dire disease shall cut, or age untie
'The knot of life, and suffer us to die:
'When after some delay, some trembling strife,
'The soul stands quiv'ring on the ridge of life;
'With fear and hope she throbs, then curious tries
'Some strange hereafter, and some hidden skies.'

Qu: From Miscell by "John Norris", 1687 & reprinted frequently? *Norris.*

makes

makes us like to God, is the only thing that can fit us for the enjoyment of him.—Here then let us hold. Let our great concern be, to be *holy as He is holy*; and then, then only, are we ſure to enjoy Him, *in whoſe light we ſhall ſee light.* And be the future ſtate of exiſtence what it will, we ſhall ſome way be happy there; and much more happy than we can now conceive; though in what particular manner we know not, becauſe God hath not revealed it.

CHAP. III.

The ſeveral Relations wherein we ſtand to God, to Chriſt, and new-Creatures.

II. SELF-KNOWLEDGE requires us to be well acquainted with the various relations in which we ſtand to other beings, and the ſeveral duties that reſult from thoſe relations. And,

(1.) Our firſt and principal concern is to conſider the relation wherein we ſtand to Him who gave us being.

We are the creatures of his hand, and the objects of his care. His power upholds the being his goodneſs gave us; his bounty accommodates us with the bleſſings of this life; and his grace provides for us the happineſs of a better.

——Nor

——Nor are we merely his creatures, but his rational and intelligent creatures. It is the dignity of our natures, that we are capable of knowing and enjoying Him that made us. And as the rational creatures of God, there are two relations eſpecially that we bear to Him; the frequent conſideration of which is abſolutely neceſſary to a right Self-Knowledge. For as our Creator, He is our King and Father: and as his creatures, we are the ſubjects of his kingdom, and the children of his family.

(1.) We are the ſubjects of his kingdom. And as ſuch we are bound,

(1.) To yield a faithful obedience to the laws of his kingdom.—And the advantages by which theſe come recommended to us above all human laws, are many—they are calculated for the private intereſt of every one, as well as that of the public; and are deſigned to promote our preſent, as well as our future happineſs—they are plainly and explicitly publiſhed; eaſily underſtood; and in fair and legible characters writ in every man's heart; and the wiſdom, reaſon, and neceſſity of them are readily diſcerned—they are urged with the moſt mighty motives that can poſſibly affect the human heart: and if any of them are difficult, the moſt effectual grace is freely offered, to encourage and aſſiſt our obedience:

dience: advantages which no human laws have to enforce the obſervance of them.—(2.) As his ſubjects, we muſt readily pay him the homage due to his ſovereignty. And this is no leſs than the homage of the heart; humbly acknowledging that we hold every thing of him, and have every thing from him. Earthly princes are forced to be content with verbal acknowledgments, or mere formal homage; for they can command nothing but what is external: but God, who knows and looks at the hearts of all his creatures, will accept of nothing but what comes from thence. He demands the adoration of our whole ſouls, which is moſt juſtly due to him who formed them, and gave them the very capacities to know and adore him.—— (3.) As faithful ſubjects, we muſt cheerfully pay him the tribute he requires of us. This is not like the tribute which earthly kings exact; who as much depend upon their ſubjects for the ſupport of their power, as their ſubjects do upon them for the protection of their property. But the tribute God requires of us, is a tribute of praiſe and honour, which he ſtands in no need of from us; for his power is independent, and his glory immutable; and he is infinitely able of himſelf to ſupport the dignity of his univerſal government. But it is the moſt natural duty we owe to him

him as creatures; for to praise him, is only to shew forth his praise; to glorify him, to celebrate his glory; and to honour him, is to render him and his ways honourable in the eyes and esteem of others. And as this is the most natural duty that creatures owe to their Creator, so it is a tribute he requires of every one of them in proportion to their respective talents and abilites to pay it.—(4.) As dutiful subjects, we must contentedly and quietly submit to the methods and administrations of his government, however dark, involved, or intricate. All governments have their *arcana imperii*, or secrets of state; which common subjects cannot penetrate. And therefore they cannot competently judge of the wisdom or rectitude of certain public measures, because they are ignorant either of the springs of them, or the ends of them, or the expediency of the means arising from the particular situation of things in the present juncture. And how much truer is this with relation to God's government of the world? whose wisdom is far above our reach, and *whose ways are not as ours!* Whatever then may be the present aspect and appearance of things, as dutiful subjects, we are bound to acquiesce; to ascribe wisdom and *righteousness to our Maker*, in confidence that the King and *Judge of all the earth will do right.*—— Again, (5.) As good

good ſubjects of God's kingdom, we are bound to pay a due regard and reverence to his miniſters; eſpecially if they diſcover an uncorrupted fidelity to his cauſe, and a pure unaffected zeal for his honour; if they do not ſeek their own intereſt more than that of their divine Maſter. The miniſters of earthly princes too often do this; and it would be happy if all the miniſters and ambaſſadors of the heavenly King were entirely clear of the imputation.—It is no uncommon thing for the honour of an earthly monarch to be wounded through the ſides of his miniſters. The defamation and ſlander that is directly thrown at them, is obliquely intended againſt Him; and as ſuch it is taken. So to attempt to make the miniſters of the goſpel, in general, the objects of deriſion, as ſome do, plainly ſhews a mind very diſſolute and diſaffected to God and religion itſelf; and is to act a part very unbecoming the dutiful ſubjects of his kingdom.——(Laſtly,) As good ſubjects, we are to do all we can to promote the intereſt of his kingdom; by defending the wiſdom of his adminiſtrations, and endeavouring to reconcile others thereunto, under all the darkneſs and difficulties that may appear therein, in oppoſition to the profane cenſures of the proſperous wicked, and the doubts and diſmays of the afflicted righteous.—This is

to

to act in character as loyal subjects of the King of heaven: and whoever forgets this part of his character, or acts contrary to it, shews a great degree of self-ignorance.

But, (2.) As the creatures of God, we are not only the subjects of his kingdom, but the children of his family. And to this relation, and the obligations of it, must we carefully attend, if we would attain the true knowledge of ourselves.—We are his children by creation; in which respect he is truly our Father. * *But now O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thine hands.* And in a more special sense we are his children by adoption. † *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*—And therefore (1.) we are under the highest obligations to love him as our Father. The love of children to parents is founded on gratitude for benefits received, which can never be requited; and ought in reason to be proportioned to those benefits. And what duty more natural than to love our benefactors? What love and gratitude then is due to him, from whom we have received the greatest benefit, even that of our being, and every thing that contributes to the comfort of it? (2.) As his children, we must honour him; that is, must speak honour-

* Isai. lxiv. 8. † Gal. iii. 26.

ably of him, and for him; and carefully avoid every thing that may tend to diſhonour his holy name and ways. ‡ *A ſon honoureth his father:—if then I be a Father, where is mine honour?*—(3.) As our Father, we are to apply to him for what we want. Whither ſhould children go but to their father for protection, help, and relief, in every danger, difficulty, and diſtreſs?--And (4.) We muſt truſt his power and wiſdom, and paternal goodneſs, to provide for us, take care of us, and do for us that which is beſt; and what that is he knows beſt. To be anxiouſly fearful what will become of us, and diſcontented and perplexed under the apprehenſion of future evils, whilſt we are in the hands and under the care of our Father who is in heaven, is not to act like children. Earthly parents cannot avert from their children all the calamities they fear, becauſe their wiſdom and power are limited; but our all-wiſe and almighty Father in heaven can. They may poſſibly want love and tenderneſs, but our heavenly Father cannot, Iſai. xlix. 15.—(5.) As children, we muſt quietly acquieſce in his diſpoſals, and not expect to ſee into the wiſdom of all his will. It would be indecent and undutiful in a child to diſpute the authority, or queſtion the wiſdom, or neglect the orders of his parents every time he could not diſcern the reaſon and deſign

‡ Mal. i. 6.

thereof.

thereof. Much more unreaſonable and unbecoming is ſuch a behaviour towards God, *who giveth not account of any of his matters; whoſe judgments are unſearchable, and whoſe ways are paſt finding out* *. — (Laſtly,) As children, we muſt patiently ſubmit to his diſcipline and correction. Earthly parents may ſometimes puniſh their children through paſſion, or for their pleaſure; but our heavenly Father always corrects his for their profit‖, and only if need be†, and never ſo much *as their iniquities deſerve* ‡. — Under his Fatherly rebukes then let us be ever humble and ſubmiſſive. — Such now is the true filial diſpoſition. Such a temper and ſuch a behaviour ſhould we ſhew towards God, if we would act in character as his children.

Theſe then are the two ſpecial relations which, as creatures, we ſtand in to God. And not to act towards him in the manner before mentioned, is to ſhew that we are ignorant of, or have not yet duly conſidered our obligations to him as his ſubjects and his children; or that we are as yet ignorant both of God and ourſelves. Thus we ſee how directly the knowledge of ourſelves leads us to the knowledge of God. So true is the obſervation of a late pious and very worthy divine, that "He that is a ſtranger to

* Job xxxiii. 13. Rom. xi. 33.
‖ Heb. xii. 10. † 1 Pet. i. 6. ‡ Ezra ix. 13.

" himſelf, is a ſtranger to God, and to every " thing that may denominate him wiſe and " happy *(q)*."

But (2.) In order to know ourſelves, there is another important relation we ſhould often think of, and that is, That in which we ſtand to Jeſus Chriſt our Redeemer.

The former was common to us as men; this is peculiar to us as chriſtians, and opens to us a new ſcene of duties and obligations, which a man can never forget, that does not groſly forget himſelf. For, as chriſtians, we are the diſciples, the followers, and the ſervants of Chriſt, redeemed by him.

And, (1.) As the diſciples of Chriſt, we are to learn of him. To take our religious ſentiments only from his goſpel, in oppoſition to all the authoritative dictates of men, who are weak and fallible as ourſelves. *Call no man maſter on earth.* Whilſt ſome affect to diſtinguiſh themſelves by party-names, as the Corinthians formerly did, (for which the Apoſtle blames them) one ſaying, *I am of Paul*; another, *I am of Apollos*; another, *I am of Cephas* *, let us remember that we are the diſciples of Chriſt; and in this ſenſe *make mention of his name only.* It is really injurious to it, to

(q) See Mr. Baxter's Dedicatory Epiſtle, prefix'd to his Treatiſe on *the Benefits of Self-acquaintance.*

* 1 Cor. i. 12.

ſeek

ſeek to diſtinguiſh ourſelves by any other. There is more carnality in ſuch party-diſtinctions, denominations, and attachments, than many good ſouls are aware of; tho' not more than the apoſtle Paul (who was unwillingly placed at the head of one himſelf) hath appriſed them of †.—We are of Chriſt; our concern is, to honour that ſuperior denomination, by living up to it. And to adhere inflexibly to his goſpel, as the only rule of our faith, the guide of our life, and the foundation of our hope, whatever contempt or abuſe we may ſuffer either from the profane or bigotted part of mankind for ſo doing. — (2.) As chriſtians, we are followers of Chriſt; and therefore bound to imitate him, and copy after that moſt excellent pattern he hath ſet us, who hath left us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps *. To ſee that the ſame holy temper be in us which was in him; and to diſcover it in the ſame manner he did, and upon like occaſions. To this he calls us ‡, and no man is any further a chriſtian than as he is a follower of Chriſt; aiming at a more perfect conformity to that moſt perfect example which he hath ſet us of univerſal goodneſs. — (3.) As chriſtians, we are the ſervants of Chriſt; and the various duties which ſervants owe to their maſ-

† 1 Cor. iii. 4. * 1 Pet. ii. 21. ‡ Mat. xi. 29.

ters in any degree, thoſe we owe to him in the higheſt degree; who expects we ſhould behave ourſelves in his ſervice with that fidelity and zeal, and ſteady regard to his honour and intereſt, at all times which we are bound to by virtue of this relation, and to which his unmerited and unlimited goodneſs and love lays us under infinite obligations.— (Laſtly,) We are moreover his redeemed ſervants; and, as ſuch, are under the ſtrongeſt motives to love and truſt him.

This deſerves to be more particularly conſidered, becauſe it opens to us another view of the human nature, in which we ſhould often ſurvey ourſelves, if we deſire to know ourſelves; and that is, as depraved or degenerate beings. The inward conteſt we ſo ſenſibly feel, at ſome ſeaſons eſpecially, between a good and a bad principle (called, in ſcripture-language, the Fleſh and the Spirit) of which ſome of the wiſeſt heathens ſeemed not to be ignorant*: this, I ſay, is demonſtration, that ſome way or other the human nature hath contracted an ill bias, (and how that came about, the ſacred ſcriptures have ſufficiently informed us) and that it is not what

* Αυχρη γαρ συνο παδὸς ἔρις βλάπτουσα λέληθεν.
Συμφυτος. *Pythag. Aur. Carm.*

A fatal inbred ſtrife does lurk within,
The cauſe of all this miſery and ſin.

it

it was when it came originally out of the hands of its Maker; ſo that the words which St. Paul ſpake with reference to the Jews in particular, are juſtly applicable to the preſent ſtate of mankind in general, *there is none righteous, no not one;— they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doth good, no not one* ‡.

This is a very mortifying thought; but an undeniable truth, and one of the firſt principles of that ſcience we are treating of, and very neceſſary to be attended to, if we would be ſenſible of the duty and obligations we owe to Chriſt as the great Redeemer; in which character he appears for the relief and recovery of mankind under this their univerſal depravity.

The two miſerable effects of the human apoſtacy are, (1.) That perverſe diſpoſitions grow up in our minds from early infancy, ſoon ſettle into vicious habits, and render us weak and unwilling to obey the dictates of conſcience and reaſon: this is commonly called the dominion of ſin. And, (2.) At the ſame time we are ſubject to the diſpleaſure of God, and the penalty of his law; which is commonly called the condemnation of ſin. Now in both theſe reſpects did Chriſt *the Lamb of God come to take away the ſin of the world*;

‡ Rom. iii. 10, 12.

i. e. to take away the reigning power of it by the atonement of his blood; to ſanctify us by his Spirit, and juſtify us by his death; by the former he reconciles us to God, and by the latter he reconciles God to us (*r*), and is at once our righteouſneſs and ſtrength. He died to purchaſe for us the happineſs we had forfeited, and ſends his grace and ſpirit to fit us for that happineſs he hath thus purchaſed. So complete is his redemption! ſo preciſely adapted is the remedy he hath provided, to the malady we had contracted!——'O bleſſed Redeemer of wretched ruined creatures, how unſpeakable are the obligations I owe thee! But Ah! How inſenſible am I to thoſe obligations! the ſaddeſt ſymptoms of degeneracy I find in my nature, is that baſe ingratitude of heart which renders me ſo unaffected with thine aſtoniſhing compaſſions. Till I know thee, I cannot know myſelf: and when I ſurvey myſelf, may I ever think of thee! may the daily conſciouſneſs of my weakneſs and guilt lead my thoughts to thee; and may every thought of thee kindle in my heart the

(*r*) By this phraſe I do not mean that God was implacable, or abſolutely irreconcileable to us, till he was pacified by the vicarious ſufferings of his Son; for how then could he have appointed him to die as our propitiatory ſacrifice? But that the death of Chriſt is the cleareſt demonſtration of God's willingneſs to be actually reconciled to us.

Even with this explanation of the phrase used above is a most unhappy & unscriptural one.

most

'moſt ardent glow of gratitude to thee, O thou 'divine, compaſſionate Friend, Lover, and Re-'deemer of mankind!'

Whoever then he be that calls himſelf a chriſtian; that is, who profeſſes to take the goſpel of Chriſt for a divine revelation, and the only rule of his faith and practice; but at the ſame time, pays a greater regard to the dictates of men than to the doctrines of Chriſt; who loſes ſight of that great example of Chriſt which ſhould animate his Chriſtian walk, is unconcerned about his ſervice, honour, and intereſt, and excludes the conſideration of his merits and atonement from his hope of happineſs,—he forgets that he is a chriſtian;—he does not conſider in what relation he ſtands to Chriſt (which is one great part of his character) and conſequently diſcovers a great degree of ſelf-ignorance.

(3.) Self-Knowledge, moreover, implies a due attention to the ſeveral relations in which we ſtand to our fellow-creatures; and the obligations that reſult from thence.

If we know ourſelves, we ſhall remember the condeſcenſion, benignity, and love that is due to inferiors: the affability, friendſhip, and kindneſs we ought to ſhew to equals; the regard, deference, and honour, which belong to ſuperiors;

and the candour, integrity, and benevolence we owe to all.

The particular duties requiſite in theſe relations are too numerous to be here mentioned. Let it ſuffice to ſay, that if a man doth not well conſider the ſeveral relations of life in which he ſtands to others, and does not take care to preſerve the decorum and propriety of thoſe relations; he may juſtly be charged with ſelf-ignorance.

And this is ſo evident in itſelf, and ſo generally allowed, that nothing is more common than to ſay, when a perſon does not behave with due decency towards his ſuperiors, ſuch a one does not underſtand himſelf. But why may not this with equal juſtice be ſaid of thoſe who act in an ill manner towards their inferiors? The expreſſion, I know is not ſo often thus applied; but I ſee no reaſon why it ſhould not, ſince one is as common, and as plain an inſtance of ſelf-ignorance as the other. Nay, of the two, perhaps men in general are more apt to be defective in their duty and behaviour towards thoſe beneath them, than they are towards thoſe that are above them. And the reaſon ſeems to be, becauſe an apprehenſion of the diſpleaſure of their ſuperiors, and the detrimental conſequences which may accrue from thence, may be a check upon them,

them, and engage them to pay the juſt regards which they expect. But there being no check to reſtrain them from violating the duties they owe to inferiors (from whoſe diſpleaſure they have little to fear) they are more ready, under certain temptations, to treat them in an unbecoming manner. And as wiſdom and ſelf-knowledge will direct a man to be particularly careful, leſt he neglect the duties he is moſt apt to forget: ſo as to the duties he owes to inferiors, in which he is moſt in danger of tranſgreſſing, he ought more ſtrongly to urge upon himſelf the indiſpenſible obligations of religion and conſcience. And if he does not, but ſuffers himſelf, through the violence of ungoverned paſſion, to be tranſported into the exceſſes of rigour, tyranny, and oppreſſion, towards thoſe whom God and nature have put into his power, it is certain he does not know himſelf; is not acquainted with his own particular weakneſs; is ignorant of the duty of his relation; and whatever he may think of himſelf, hath not the true ſpirit of government; becauſe he wants the art of ſelf-government. For he that is unable to govern himſelf, can never be fit to govern others.

Would we know ourſelves then, we muſt conſider ourſelves as creatures, as chriſtians, and as men, and remember the obligations, which, as

ſuch, we are under to God, to Chriſt, and our fellow men, in the ſeveral relations we bear to them, in order to maintain the propriety, and fulfil the duties of thoſe relations.

CHAP. IV.

We muſt duly conſider the Rank and Station of Life in which Providence has placed us, and what it is that becomes and adorns it.

III. A MAN that knows himſelf, will deliberately conſider and attend to the particular rank and ſtation in life in which Providence hath placed him; and what is the duty and decorum of that ſtation: what part is given him to act, what character to maintain; and with what decency and propriety he acts that part, or maintains that character,

For a man to aſſume a character, or aim at a part that does not belong to him, is affectation. And whence is it that affectation of any kind appears ſo ridiculous, and expoſes men to univerſal and juſt contempt, but becauſe it is a certain indication of ſelf-ignorance? Whence is it that many ſeem ſo willing to be thought ſomething, when they are nothing, and ſeek to excel in thoſe things in which they cannot, whilſt they neglect thoſe things in which they may excel?

Whence

Whence is it that they counteract the intention of nature and providence; that when theſe intended them one thing, they would fain be another? Whence, I ſay, but from an ignorance of themſelves, the rank of life they are in, and of the part and character which properly belong to them?

It is a juſt obſervation, and an excellent document of a moral heathen, 'That human life is a 'drama, and mankind the actors; who have 'their ſeveral parts aſſigned them by the maſ-'ter of the theatre, who ſtands behind the ſcenes, 'and obſerves in what manner every one acts. 'Some have a ſhort part allotted them, and ſome 'a long one: ſome a low, and ſome a high one. 'It is not he that acts the higheſt or moſt ſhining 'part on the ſtage, that comes off with the great-'eſt applauſe; but he that acts his part beſt, 'whatever it be. To take care then to act our 'reſpective parts in life well, is ours; but to 'chooſe what part in life we ſhall act, is not 'ours, but God's' *(r)*.—But a man can never act his part well, if he does not attend to it; does not

(r) Epictet. Enchir. cap. 23. — Quomodo fabula, ſic vita: non quàm diu, ſed quàm bene acta ſit, refert. *Sen. Ep.* 69. ad fin. Life is a ſtage-play; it matters not how long we act, ſo we act well.—Non eſt bonum, vivere, ſed benè vivere. *Id. de Benef.* lib. 3. cap. 31. It is not life, but living well, that is the bleſſing.

know

know what becomes it; much leſs, if he affect to act another, which nature never deſigned him. It is always ſelf-ignorance that leads a man to act out of character.

Is it a mean and low ſtation of life thou art in? Know then, that providence calls thee to the exerciſe of induſtry, contentment, ſubmiſſion, patience, hope, and humble dependence on him, and a reſpectful deference to thy ſuperiors. In this way thou mayeſt ſhine through thine obſcurity; and render thyſelf amiable in the ſight of God and man: and not only ſo, but find more ſatisfaction, ſafety, and ſelf-enjoyment, than they who move in a higher ſphere, from whence they are in danger of falling.

But hath providence called thee to act in a more public character, and for a more extenſive benefit to the world?—Thy firſt care then ought to be, that thy example, as far as its influence reaches, may be an encouragement to the practice of univerſal virtue. And next, to ſhine in thoſe virtues eſpecially, which beſt adorn thy ſtation: as benevolence, charity, wiſdom, moderation, firmneſs, and inviolable integrity: with an undiſmayed fortitude to preſs through all oppoſition in accompliſhing thoſe ends which thou haſt a proſpect and probability of attaining for the apparent good of mankind.

And

And as ſelf-acquaintance will teach us what part in life we ought to act, ſo the knowledge of that will ſhew us whom we ought to imitate, and wherein. We are not to take example of conduct from thoſe who have a very different part aſſigned them from ours, unleſs in thoſe things that are univerſally ornamental and exemplary. If we do, we ſhall but expoſe our affectation and weakneſs, and ourſelves to contempt for acting out of character; for what is decent in one may be ridiculous in another. Nor muſt we blindly follow thoſe who move in the ſame ſphere, and ſuſtain the ſame character with ourſelves; but only in thoſe things that are befitting that character. For it is not the perſon, but the character, we are to regard; and to imitate him no farther than he keeps to that.

This caution particularly concerns youth, who are apt to imitate their ſuperiors very implicitly, and eſpecially ſuch as ſhine in the profeſſion they themſelves are intended for; but, for want of judgment to diſtinguiſh what is fit and decent, are apt to imitate their very foibles; which a partiality for their perſons makes them deem as excellencies: and thereby they become doubly ridiculous, both by acting out of character themſelves, and by a weak and ſervile imitation of others in the very things in which they do ſo

too.

too. To maintain a character then with decency, we muſt keep our eye only upon that which is proper to it.

In fine, as no man can excel in every thing, we muſt conſider what part is allotted us to act in the ſtation in which providence hath placed us, and to keep to that, be it what it will, and ſeek to excel in that only.

CHAP. V.

Every Man ſhould be well acquainted with his own Talents and Capacities; and in what manner they are to be exerciſed and improved to the greateſt advantage.

IV. A MAN cannot be ſaid to know himſelf, till he is well acquainted with his proper talents and capacities; knows for what ends he received them; and how they may be moſt fitly applied and improved for thoſe ends.

A wiſe and ſelf-underſtanding man, inſtead of aiming at talents he hath not, will ſet about cultivating thoſe he hath; as the way in which providence points out his proper uſefulneſs.

As in order to the edification of the church, the ſpirit of God at firſt conferred upon the miniſters of it a great variety of *ſpiritual gifts**, ſo

* 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.

for

for the good of the community, God is pleaſed now to confer upon men a great variety of natural talents; and *every one hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, another after that* †. And every one is to take care *not to neglect, but to ſtir up the gift of God which is in him* ‡, becauſe it was given him to be improved: and not only the abuſe, but the neglect of it muſt hereafter be accounted for. Witneſs the doom of that unprofitable ſervant, who *laid up his ſingle pound in a napkin* *; and of him who went and *hid his talent in the earth* §.

It is certainly a ſign of great ſelf-ignorance, for a man to venture out of his depth, or attempt any thing he wants opportunity or capacity to accompliſh. And therefore a wiſe man will conſider with himſelf, before he undertakes any thing of conſequence, whether he hath abilities to carry him through it, and whether the iſſue of it is like to be for his credit; leſt he ſink under the weight he lays upon himſelf, and incur the juſt cenſure of raſhneſs, preſumption, and folly. See Luke xiv. 28—32 (*s*). It

† 1 Cor. vii. 7. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 14.—2 Tim. i. 6.
* Luke xix. 20, 24. § Mat. xxv. 25, 30.

(*s*) ——— ——— Buccæ
Noſcenda eſt menſura tuæ, ſpectandaque rebus
In ſummis, minimis, ——— *Juv. Sat.* 11.
——— verſante diu quid ferre recuſant
Quid valeant Humeri. ——— *Hor. de Art. Poet.*
He that takes up a burden that is too heavy for him, is in a fair way to break his back.

Ἀνθρω

It is no uncommon thing for ſome who excel in one thing, to imagine they may excel in every thing; and, not content with that ſhare of merit which every one allows them, are ſtill catching at that which doth not belong to them. Why ſhould a good orator wiſh to be thought a poet? Why muſt a celebrated divine ſet up for a politician? Or a ſtateſman affect the philoſopher? Or a mechanic the ſcholar? Or a wiſe man labour to be thought a wit? This is a weakneſs that flows from ſelf-ignorance, and is incident to the greateſt men. Nature ſeldom forms an univerſal genius; but deals out her favours in the preſent ſtate with a parſimonious hand. — Many a man, by this foible, hath weakened a well-eſtabliſhed reputation *(c)*.

Ανθρωπε, πρωτον επισκεψαι, οποιον εστι το πραγμα· εἰτα και την σεαυτε φυσιν καταμαθε, ει δυνασαι βασασαι.

Epict. Enchir. cap. 36.

In every buſineſs conſider, firſt, what it is you are about; and then your own ability, whether it be ſufficient to carry you through it.

(c)———non omnia poſſumus omnes. *Virg.*

Cæcilius, a famous Rhetorician of Sicily, who lived in the time of Auguſtus, and wrote a treatiſe on the Sublime (which is cenſured by Longinus, in the beginning of his) was a man of a haſty and enterpriſing ſpirit, and very apt to overſhoot himſelf on all occaſions: and particularly ventured out of his depth in his compariſon of Demoſthenes and Cicero. Whereupon Plutarch makes this ſage and candid remark: "If "(ſaith he) it was a thing obvious and eaſy for every man "to know himſelf, poſſibly that ſaying, γνωθι σεαυτον, had not "paſſed for a divine oracle." *Plut. Liv.* vol. vii. p. 347.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

We muſt be well acquainted with our Inabilities, and thoſe Things in which we are naturally deficient, as well as thoſe in which we excel.

V. WE muſt, in order to a thorough ſelf-acquaintance, not only conſider our talents and proper abilities, but have an eye to our frailties and deficiencies, that we may know where our weakneſs, as well as our ſtrength lies.——— Otherwiſe, like Sampſon, we may run ourſelves into infinite temptations and troubles.

Every man hath a weak ſide. Every wiſe man knows where it is, and will be ſure to keep a double guard there.

There is ſome wiſdom in concealing a weakneſs. This cannot be done till it be firſt known; nor can it be known without a good degree of ſelf-acquaintance.

It is ſtrange to obſerve what pains ſome men are at to expoſe themſelves; to ſignalize their own folly; and to ſet out to the moſt public view thoſe things which they ought to be aſhamed to think ſhould ever enter into their character. But ſo it is; ſome men ſeem to be aſhamed of thoſe things which would be their glory, whilſt others *glory in their ſhame* *.

* Phil. iii. 19.

The

The greateſt weakneſs in a man is to publiſh his weakneſſes, and to appear fond to have them known. But vanity will often prompt a man to this; who, unacquainted with the meaſure of his capacities, attempts things out of his power, and beyond his reach; whereby he makes the world acquainted with two things to his diſadvantage, which they were ignorant of before; viz. his deficiency, and his ſelf-ignorance in appearing ſo blind to it.

It is ill judged (though very common) to be leſs aſhamed of a want of temper than underſtanding. For it is no real diſhonour or fault in a man to have but a ſmall ability of mind, provided he hath not the vanity to ſet up for a genius (which would be as ridiculous, as for a man of ſmall ſtrength and ſtature of body to ſet up for a champion) becauſe this is what he cannot help. But a man may in a good meaſure correct the fault of his natural temper, if he be well acquainted with it, and duly watchful over it. And therefore to betray a prevailing weakneſs of temper, or an ungoverned paſſion, diminiſhes a man's reputation much more than to diſcover a weakneſs of judgment or underſtanding.—But what is moſt diſhonourable of all is, for a man at once to diſcover a great genius and an ungoverned mind. Becauſe that ſtrength of reaſon

and

understanding he is master of, gives him a great advantage for the government of his passions. And therefore his suffering himself notwithstanding to be governed by them, shews that he hath too much neglected or misapplied his natural talent, and willingly submitted to the tyranny of those lusts and passions, over which nature had furnished him with abilities to have secured an easy conquest.

A wise man hath his foibles as well as a fool. But the difference between them is, that the foibles of the one are known to himself, and concealed from the world; the foibles of the other are known to the world, and concealed from himself. The wise man sees those frailties in himself, which others cannot; but the fool is blind to those blemishes in his character which are conspicuous to every body else. Whence it appears, that self-knowledge is that which makes the main difference between a wise man and a fool, in the moral sense of that word.

CHAP. VII.

Concerning the Knowledge of our Constitutional Sins.

VI. SELF-ACQUAINTANCE shews a man the particular sins he is most exposed and addicted to; and discovers not only what

what is ridiculous, but what is criminal in his conduct and temper.

A man's outward actions are generally the plaineſt index of his inward diſpoſitions: and by the allowed ſins of his life, you may know the reigning vices of his mind. Is he addicted to luxury and debauch? Senſuality then appears to be his prevailing taſte. Is he given to revenge and cruelty? Choler and malice then reign in his heart. Is he confident, bold, and enterpriſing? Ambition appears to be the ſecret ſpring. Is he ſly and deſigning, given to intrigue and artifice? You may conclude there is a natural ſubtilty of temper that prompts him to this; and this ſecret diſpoſition is criminal in proportion to the degree in which theſe outward actions, which ſpring from it, tranſgreſs the bounds of reaſon and virtue.

Every man hath ſomething peculiar in the turn or caſt of his mind, which diſtinguiſhes him as much as the particular conſtitution of his body. And both theſe, viz. his particular turn of mind and conſtitution of body, not only incline and diſpoſe him to ſome kind of ſins more than to others, but render the practice of certain virtues much more eaſy *.

Now

* Men, with regard to their bodies, and bodily appetites, are pretty much alike; but with regard to their ſouls, and their

Now theſe ſins to which men are commonly moſt inclined, and the temptations which they have leaſt power to reſiſt, are, and not improperly, called their conſtitutional ſins; their peculiar frailties; and, in ſcripture, their * *own iniquities*, and the ſins which † *do moſt eaſily beſet them (u)*.

'As in the humours of the body, ſo in the 'vices of the mind, there is one predominant 'which has an aſcendant over us, and leads and 'governs us. It is in the body of ſin, what the

their mental taſtes and diſpoſitions, they are often as different as if they were quite of another ſpecies; governed by different views, entertained with different pleaſures, animated with different hopes, and affected by different motives, and diſtinguiſhed by as different tempers and inclinations, as if they were not of the ſame kind. So that I am very ready to believe, that there is not a greater difference between an angel and ſome of the beſt and wiſeſt of men; or between a devil and ſome of the worſt and wickedeſt of men, with regard to their tempers and diſpoſitions, than there is between ſome ſort of men and ſome others. And what inclines me to this ſentiment is, conſidering the eaſy tranſition which nature always obſerves in paſſing from one order or kind of beings to another (which I have before taken notice of) together with the prodigious difference there appears to be between ſome and others of the human ſpecies, almoſt in every thing belonging to their ſouls. For ſome there are, "in "whom (as one expreſſes it) one would think nature had "placed every thing the wrong way;" depraved in their opinions, unintelligible in their reaſoning, irregular in their actions, and vitious in every diſpoſition. Whilſt in ſome others we ſee almoſt every thing amiable and excellent that can adorn and exalt the human mind, under the diſadvantages of mortality.

* Pſalm xviii. 23. † Heb. xii. 1.

(u) η αμαρτια ευπεριστατος, *the well circumſtanced ſin.*

'heart

'heart is in the body of our nature; it begins 'to live firſt, and dies laſt: and whilſt it lives, it 'communicates life and ſpirit to the whole bo-'dy of ſin; and when it dies, the body of 'ſin expires with it. It is the ſin to which 'our conſtitution leads, our circumſtances betray, 'and cuſtom inſlaves us; the ſin to which not 'our virtues only, but vices too, lower their top-'ſails and ſubmit; the ſin which, when we would 'impoſe upon God and our conſciences, we ex-'cuſe and diſguiſe with all imaginable artifice 'and ſophiſtry; but, when we are ſincere with 'both, we oppoſe firſt, and conquer laſt. It is, 'in a word, the ſin which reigns and rules in the 'unregenerate, and too often alarms and diſturbs '(ah! that I could ſay no more) the regene-'rate' *(w)*.

Some are more inclined to the ſins of the fleſh; ſenſuality, intemperance, uncleanneſs, ſloth, ſelf-indulgence, and exceſs in animal gratifications. Others, to the ſins of the ſpirit, pride, malice, covetouſneſs, ambition, wrath, revenge, envy, &c. And I am perſuaded there are few but, upon a thorough ſearch into themſelves, may find that ſome one of theſe ſins hath ordinarily a greater power over them than the reſt. Others often obſerve it in them, if they themſelves do not. And for a man not to know his predominant iniquity, is great

(w) See Dr. Lucas's Sermons, vol. i. p. 151.

ſelf-

ſelf-ignorance indeed; and a ſign that he has all his life lived far from home; becauſe he is not acquainted with that relating to himſelf, which every one, who is but half an hour in his company perhaps may be able to inform him of. Hence proceeds that extreme weakneſs which ſome diſcover in cenſuring others, for the very ſame faults they are guilty of themſelves, and perhaps in a much higher degree; on which the apoſtle Paul animadverts, *Rom.* ii. 1. *(x)*.

It muſt be owned, it is an irkſome and a diſagreeable buſineſs for a man to turn his own accuſer; to ſearch after his own faults, and keep his eye upon that which gives him ſhame and pain to ſee. It is like tearing open an old wound. But it is better to do this, than to let it mortify. The wounds of the conſcience, like thoſe of the body, cannot be well cured till they are ſearched to the bottom; and they cannot be ſearched without pain. A man who is engaged in the ſtudy of himſelf, muſt be content to know the worſt of himſelf *(y)*. Do

(x) Quis tulerit *Gracchos* de ſeditione querentes?
Clodius accuſat Mæchos? *Catalina Cathegum?*
Juv. Sat. 12.

(y) O nimis gravis anguſtia! Si me inſpicio, non tolero meipſum: ſi non inſpicio, neſcio meipſum. Si me conſidero, terret me facies mea: ſi me non conſidero, fallit me damnatio mea. Si me video, horror eſt intolerabilis: ſi non video, mors eſt inevitabilis. — *O grievous ſtreight! If I look into myſelf, I cannot endure myſelf: If I look not into myſelf, I cannot know myſelf. If I conſider myſelf, my own face affrights me:*

Do not therefore ſhut your eyes againſt your darling ſin, or be averſe to find it out. Why ſhould you ſtudy to conceal or excuſe it, and fondly cheriſh that viper in your boſom? ——— 'Some men deal by their ſins as ſome ladies do 'by their perſons. When their beauty is de- 'cayed, they ſeek to hide it from themſelves by 'falſe glaſſes, and from others by paint. So, 'many ſeek to hide their ſins from themſelves 'by falſe gloſſes, and from others by excuſes, or 'falſe colours' *(z)*. But the greateſt cheat they put upon themſelves. * *They that cover their ſins ſhall not proſper.* It is dangerous ſelf-flattery to give ſoft and ſmoothing names to ſins, in order to diſguiſe their nature. Rather lay your hand upon your heart, and † *thruſt it into your boſom*, though it *come out* (as Moſes' did) *leprous as Snow (a).* And

If I conſider not myſelf, my damnation deceives me. If I ſee myſelf, my horror is intolerable: If I ſee not myſelf, death is unavoidable. Anſelme.

(z) Baxter. * *Prov.* xxviii. 13. † *Exod.* iv. 6.

(a) Initium eſt ſalutis, notitia peccati: nam qui peccare ſe neſcit, corrigi non vult. Deprehendas te oportet, antequàm emendes. Quidam vitiis gloriantur. Tu exiſtimas aliquid de remedio cogitare, qui mala ſua virtutum loco numerant? Ideo quantum potes teipſum coargue: Inquire in te: accuſatoris primum partibus fungere, deinde judicis, noviſſimè deprecatoris. Aliquando te offende. *Sen. Epiſt.* 28 —— *The knowledge of ſin is the firſt ſtep towards amendment: for he that does not know he hath offended, is not willing to be reproved. You muſt therefore find out yourſelf, before you can amend yourſelf. Some glory in their vices. And do you imagine they have any thought about reforming, who place their very vices in*

And to find out our moſt beloved ſin, let us conſider what are thoſe worldly objects or amuſements which give us the higheſt delight; this, it is probable, will lead us directly to ſome one of our darling iniquities, if it be a ſin of commiſſion: and what are thoſe duties which we read or hear of from the word of God, to which we find ourſelves moſt diſinclined? And this, in all likelihood, will help us to detect ſome of our peculiar ſins of omiſſion; which without ſuch previous examination we may not be ſenſible of. And thus we may make a proficiency in one conſiderable branch of ſelf-knowledge *(b)*.

in the room of virtues? Therefore reprove thyſelf: ſearch thyſelf very narrowly. Firſt turn accuſer to thyſelf, then a judge, and then a ſuppliant. And dare for once to diſpleaſe thyſelf.

(b) Et hoc ipſum argumentum eſt in melius tranſlati animi, quod vitia ſua, quæ adhuc ignorabat, videt. *Sen. Epiſt.* 6. — *It is a good argument of a reformed mind, that it ſees thoſe vices in itſelf, which it was before ignorant of.*

A man's predominant ſin uſually ariſes out of his predominant paſſion; which therefore he ſhould diligently obſerve. The nature and force of which is beautifully deſcribed by a late great maſter of Engliſh verſe.

On different ſenſes different objects ſtrike,
Hence different paſſions more or leſs enflame,
As ſtrong or weak the organs of the frame:
And hence one maſter-paſſion in the breaſt,
Like Aaron's ſerpent, ſwallows up the reſt.
Nature its mother, habit is its nurſe;
Wit, ſpirit, faculties, but make it worſe;
Reaſon itſelf but gives it edge and power,
As heaven's bleſt beam turns vinegar more ſour.
Ah! If ſhe lend not arms as well as rules,
What can ſhe more than tell us we are fools?
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend;
A ſharp accuſer, but a helpleſs friend!

CHAP. VIII.

The Knowledge of our moſt dangerous Temptations neceſſary to Self-Knowledge.

VII. A MAN that rightly knows himſelf, is acquainted with his peculiar temptations; and knows when, and in what circumſtances, he is in the greateſt danger of tranſgreſſing.

Reader, if ever you would know yourſelf, you muſt examine this point thoroughly. And if you have never done it, make a pauſe when you have read this chapter, and do it now. Conſider in what company you are moſt apt to loſe the poſſeſſion and government of yourſelf; on what occaſions you are apt to be moſt vain and unguarded, moſt warm and precipitant. Flee that company, avoid thoſe occaſions, if you would keep your conſcience clear. What is it that robs you moſt of your time and temper? If you have a due regard to the improvement of the one, and the preſervation of the other, you will regret ſuch a loſs; and ſhun the occaſions of it, as carefully as you would a road beſet with robbers.

But eſpecially muſt you attend to the occaſions which moſt uſually betray you into your favourite vices; and conſider the ſpring from whence they ariſe, and the circumſtances which moſt favour

favour them. They ariſe doubtleſs from your natural temper, which ſtrongly diſpoſes and inclines you to them. That temper then, or particular turn of deſire, muſt be carefully watched over as a moſt dangerous quarter; and the opportunities and circumſtances which favour thoſe inclinations muſt be reſolutely avoided, as the ſtrongeſt temptations. For the way to ſubdue a criminal inclination is, firſt, to avoid the known occaſions that excite it; and then to curb the firſt motions of it (*c*). And thus having no opportunity of being indulged, it will of itſelf in time loſe its force, and fail of its wonted victory.

The ſureſt way to conquer, is ſometimes to decline a battle; to weary out the enemy, by keeping him at bay. Fabius Maximus did not uſe this ſtratagem more ſucceſsfully againſt Hannibal than a chriſtian may againſt his peculiar vice, if he be but watchful of his advantages. It is dangerous to provoke an unequal enemy to the fight, or to run into ſuch a ſituation, where we cannot expect to eſcape without a diſadvantageous encounter.

It is of unſpeakable importance, in order to ſelf-knowledge and ſelf-government, to be acquainted with all the acceſſes and avenues to ſin,

(*c*) Principiis obſta: ſerò medicina paratur
Cum mala per longas invaluere moras. *Ovid.*

and to obſerve which way it is that we ourſelves too often approach it; and to ſet reaſon and conſcience to guard thoſe paſſes, thoſe uſual inlets to vice, which if a man once enters, he will find a retreat extremely difficult *(d)*.

'Watchfulneſs, which is always neceſſary, is 'chiefly ſo when the firſt aſſaults are made. For 'then the enemy is moſt eaſily repulſed; if we 'never ſuffer him to get within us, but upon the 'very firſt approach draw up our forces, and 'fight him without the gate. And this will be 'more manifeſt, if we obſerve by what methods 'and degrees temptations grow upon us.——— 'The firſt thing that preſents itſelf to the mind 'is a plain ſingle thought; this ſtraight is im-'proved into a ſtrong imagination; that again 'enforced by a ſenſible delight; then follow 'evil motions; and when theſe are once ſtirred, 'there wants nothing but the aſſent of the will, 'and then the work is finiſhed. Now the firſt 'ſteps to this are ſeldom thought worth our care; 'ſometimes not taken notice of; ſo that the 'enemy is frequently got cloſe up to us, and 'even within our trenches, before we obſerve 'him *(e)*.'

(d) ——————— me veſtigia terrent
Omnia te adverſum ſpectantia, nulla retrorſum. *Hor.*
——————— Facilis deſcenſus averni.
Sed revocare gradum, &c. *Virg.*

(e) Stanhope's Thomas à Kempis, pag. 22.

As men have their particular ſins, which do moſt eaſily beſet them; ſo they have their particular temptations, which do moſt eaſily overcome them. That may be a very great temptation to one, which is none at all to another. And if a man does not know what are his greateſt temptations, he muſt have been a great ſtranger indeed to the buſineſs of ſelf-employment.

As the ſubtle enemy of mankind takes care to draw men gradually into ſin, ſo he uſually draws them by degrees into temptation. As he diſguiſes the ſin, ſo he conceals the temptation to it; well knowing that were they but once ſenſible of the danger of their ſin, they would be ready to be on their guard againſt it. Would we know ourſelves thoroughly then, we muſt get acquainted not only with our moſt uſual temptations, that we be not unawares drawn into ſin, but with the previous ſteps and preparatory circumſtances, which make way for thoſe temptations, that we be not drawn unawares into the occaſions of ſin; for thoſe things which lead us into temptations, are to be conſidered as temptations, as well as thoſe which immediately lead us into ſin. And a man that knows himſelf will be aware of his remote temptations, as well as the more immediate ones; *e. g.* If he find the company of a paſſionate man is a temptation (as Solomon tells us it is, Prov. xxii. 24, 25.) he will not only avoid it, but thoſe occaſions

occaſions that may lead him into it. And the petition in the Lord's Prayer makes it as much a man's duty to be upon his guard againſt temptation, as under it. Nor can a man pray from his heart that God would not lead him into temptation, if he take no care himſelf to avoid it.

CHAP. IX.

Self-Knowledge diſcovers the ſecret Prejudices of the Heart.

VIII. ANOTHER important branch of ſelf-knowledge is, for a man to be acquainted with his own prejudices; or thoſe ſecret prepoſſeſſions of his heart, which though ſo deep and latent, that he may not be ſenſible of them, are often ſo ſtrong and prevalent, as to give a mighty but imperceptible bias to the mind.

There is no one particular that I know of wherein ſelf-knowledge more eminently conſiſts, than it does in this. It being therefore ſo eſſential a branch of my ſubject, and a point to which men ſeldom pay an attention equal to its importance, I beg leave to treat it with a little more preciſion.

Theſe prejudices of the human mind may be conſidered with regard to opinions, perſons, and things.

(1.) With regard to opinions.

It

It is a common obſervation, but well expreſſed by a late celebrated writer, 'That we ſet out in 'life with ſuch poor beginnings of knowledge, 'and grow up under ſuch remains of ſuperſtition 'and ignorance, ſuch influences of company and 'faſhion, ſuch inſinuations of pleaſure, &c. that 'it is no wonder if men get habits of thinking 'only in one way; that theſe habits in time 'grow rigid and confirmed; and ſo their minds 'come to be overcaſt with thick prejudices, 'ſcarce penetrable by any ray of truth, or light 'of reaſon (*f*).'

There is no man but is more attached to one particular ſet or ſcheme of opinions in philoſophy, politics, and religion, than he is to another; I mean if he hath employed his thoughts at all about them. The queſtion we ſhould examine then is, How came we by thoſe attachments? Whence are we ſo fond of theſe particular notions? Did we come fairly by them? or were they impoſed upon us, and dictated to our eaſy belief, before we were able to judge of them? This is moſt likely. For the impreſſions we early receive, generally grow up with us, and are thoſe we leaſt care to part with. However, which way ſoever we came by them, they muſt be re-examined, and brought to the touchſtone of ſound ſenſe, ſolid reaſon, and plain ſcripture.

(*f*) See *Religion of Nature delin.* pag. 129.

If they will not bear this after hard rubbing, they muſt be diſmiſſed, as no genuine principles of truth, but as counterfeits impoſed upon us under guiſe and ſemblance of it.

And as reaſon and ſcripture muſt diſcover our prejudices to us, ſo they only can help us to get rid of them. By theſe we are to rectify, and to theſe are we to conform, all our opinions and ſentiments in religion, as our only ſtandard, excluſive of all other rules, light, or authority, whatſoever,

And care muſt farther be taken that we do not make ſcripture and reaſon bend and buckle to our notions; which will rather confirm our prejudices than cure them. For whatever cannot evidently be proved, without the help of overſtrained metaphors, and the arts of ſophiſtry, is much to be ſuſpected; which uſed to make Archbiſhop Tillotſon ſay, *Non amo argutias in Theologia*; I do not love ſubtilties in divinity. But,

(2.) The human mind is very apt to be prejudiced either for or againſt certain perſons, as well as certain ſentiments. And as prejudice will lead a man to talk very unreaſonably with regard to the latter, ſo will it lead him to act as unreaſonably with regard to the former.

What is the reaſon, for inſtance, that we cannot help having a more hearty affection for ſome perſons than others? Is it from a ſimilarity of taſte

taſte and temper? Or ſomething in their addreſs, that flatters our vanity? or ſomething in their humour that hits our fancy? Or ſomething in their converſation, that improves our underſtanding? Or a certain ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, and agreeableneſs of manner, that is naturally engaging? Or by benefits received or expected from them? Or from ſome eminent and diſtinguiſhed excellency in them? Or from none of theſe; but ſomething elſe, we cannot tell what?— Such ſort of enquiries will ſhow us whether our eſteem and affections be rightly placed; or flow from mere inſtinct, blind prejudice, or ſomething worſe.

And ſo, on the other hand, with regard to our diſaffection towards any one, or the diſguſt we have taken againſt him; if we would know ourſelves, we muſt examine into the bottom of this; and ſee not only what is the pretended, but true cauſe of it: whether it be juſtifiable, and our reſentments duly proportioned to it. —— Is his manner of thinking, talking, and acting, quite different from mine, and therefore what I cannot approve? Or have I received ſome real affront or injury from him? Be it ſo, my continued reſentment againſt him, on either of theſe accounts, may be owing, notwithſtanding, more to ſome unreaſonable prejudice in me, than to any real fault in him.

For as to the former: his way of thinking,

talking, and acting, may poſſibly be juſter than my own; which the mere force of cuſtom and habit only makes me prefer to his. However, be it ever ſo wrong, he may not have had the ſame advantage of improving his underſtanding, addreſs, and conduct, as I have had; and therefore his defects herein are more excuſable. And he may have many other kind of excellencies which I have not. ——— 'But he is not only ig-'norant and unmanner'd, but unſufferably vain, 'conceited and overbearing at the ſame time.' ——Why, that perhaps he cannot help. It is the fault of his nature. He is the object of pity rather than reſentment. And had I ſuch a diſpoſition by nature, I ſhould perhaps, with all my ſelf-improvement, find it a difficult thing to manage. And therefore, tho' I can never chuſe ſuch a one for an agreeable companion, yet I ought not to harbour a diſlike to him, but love, and pity, and pray for him, as a perſon under a great misfortune; and be thankful that I am not under the ſame. ——— 'But he is quite blind to 'this fault of his temper, and does not appear to 'be in the leaſt ſenſible of it.'—Why, that is a greater misfortune ſtill; and he ought to be the more pitied.

And as to the other pretended ground of diſguſt, 'he hath often offended and injured me.' Let me conſider, (1.) whether any offence was really

really intended; whether I do not impute that to ill nature, which was only owing to ill manners; or that to deſign, which proceeded only from ignorance. Do I not take offence before it is given? If ſo, the fault is mine, and not his; and the reſentment I have conceived againſt him, I ought to turn upon myſelf *(g)*. ——— Again, (2.) *Did I not provoke him to it, when I knew his temper?* The fault is ſtill my own. I did, or might know the pride, paſſion, perverſeneſs of his nature; why then did I exaſperate him? A man that would needleſly rouſe a lion, muſt not expect always to come off ſo favourably as the hero of La Mancha. ——— But (3.) Suppoſe I were not the aggreſſor; yet, how came I into his company? Who led me into the temptation? He hath acted according to his nature in what he hath done; but I have not acted according to my reaſon, in laying myſelf ſo open to him. I knew him; why did I not ſhun him, as I would any other dangerous animal that does miſchief by inſtinct? If I muſt needs put my finger into a waſp's neſt, why ſhould I blame them for ſtinging me?——— Or, (4.) If I could not avoid his company, *why did I not arm myſelf?* Why did I venture defenceleſs into ſo much danger? Or, (5.) Suppoſe he hath done me a real and unde-

(g) For every trifle ſcorn to take offence;
That always ſhews great pride or little ſenſe.
Good nature and good ſenſe muſt always join;
To err is human, to forgive divine.

ſerved

ſerved injury, without my fault or provocation; yet *does not my diſcontent aggravate it?* Does it not appear greater to me than it does to any body elſe? or than it will to me after the preſent ferment is over? —— And (laſtly) after all, *muſt I never forgive?* How ſhall I be able to repeat the Lord's Prayer, or read our Saviour's comment upon it (Mat. vi. 14, 15.) with an unforgiving temper? Do I not hope to be forgiven *ten thouſand talents?* and cannot I forgive my *fellow-ſervant thirty-pence?* When I know not but he hath repented, and God hath forgiven him, whoſe forgiveneſs I want infinitely more than my greateſt enemy does mine *.

* A man deſpiſes me: what then? Did he know me more, he would perhaps deſpiſe me more. But I know myſelf better than he can know me; and therefore deſpiſe myſelf more. And though his contempt in this inſtance may be groundleſs, yet in others it would be but too well founded. I will therefore not only bear with, but forgive it. — *Contemnendus eſt ipſe contemptus*, ſaith Seneca. — But ſuch retorted ſcorn is more becoming the character of a ſtoic than a chriſtian.

It has been reckoned a wiſe and witty anſwer which one of the philoſophers returned to his friend, who adviſed him to revenge an injury that had been done him: "What (ſays he) "if an aſs kicks me, muſt I needs kick him again?" And perhaps there is more wit than wiſdom in that reply. It ſeems indeed to carry in it ſomething of a true greatneſs of mind; but does it not at the ſame time diſcover a kind of haughty and contemptuous ſpirit? The truth is (as a judicious writer obſerves upon it)—"it is at beſt but a lame and "miſhapen charity; it has more of pride than goodneſs. We "ſhould learn of the holy Jeſus, who was not only meek, but "lowly. We ſhould contemn the injury, and pity the weakneſs; but ſhould not diſdain or deſpiſe the perſons of our "enemies. *Charity vaunteth not herſelf, is not puffed up, "doth not behave itſelf unſeemly.*" See *Scougal's Duty of Loving our Enemies.*

Such

Such conſiderations are of great uſe to ſoften our prejudices againſt perſons; and at once to diſcover the true ſpring, and prevent the bad effects of them. And happy would it be for a chriſtian, could he but call to mind and apply to his relief half the good things which that excellent heathen emperor and philoſopher Marcus Antoninus could ſay upon this ſubject. Some of which I have, for the benefit of the Engliſh reader, extracted and thrown into the margin *(h)*.

(3.) The

(h) In the morning remember to ſay to thyſelf, This day perhaps I may meet with ſome impertinent, ungrateful, peeviſh, tricking, envious, churliſh fellow. Now all theſe ill qualities in them proceed from their ignorance of good and evil. And ſince I am ſo happy as to underſtand the natural beauty of a good action, and the deformity of an ill one; and ſince the perſon that diſobliges me is of near kin to me; and tho' not juſt of the ſame blood and family, yet of the ſame divine extract as to his mind; and finally, ſince I am convinced that no one can do me real injury, becauſe he cannot force me to do a diſhoneſt thing; for theſe reaſons I cannot find in my heart to hate him, or ſo much as to be angry with him. *Marc. Anton. Medit. Book* 2. § 1.

You are juſt taking leave of the world; and have you not yet learned to be friends with every body? And that to be an honeſt man, is the only way to be a wiſe one? *B.* 4. *ſec.* 37.

To expect an impoſſibility is madneſs; now it is impoſſible for ill men not to do ill things. *Id. Book* 5. § 17.

It is the privilege of human nature above brutes to love thoſe that offend us; in order to this, conſider (1) That the offending party is of kin to you; (2.) and acts thus, becauſe he knows no better; (3.) he may have no deſign to offend you; (4.) you will both of you quickly be in your graves; but above all, (5.) you have received no harm from him. For your mind or reaſon is the ſame it was before. *B.* 7. § 22.

Think upon your laſt hour, and do not trouble yourſelf about other people's faults, but leave them there where they muſt be anſwered for. *Id. Book* 7, § 29.

Do not return the temper of ill-natured people upon themſelves,

(3.) The mind is apt to be prejudiced againſt, or in favour of certain things and actions, as well as certain ſentiments and perſons.

ſelves, nor treat them as they do the reſt of mankind. *Id. Book* 7. § 55.

Tho' the Gods are immortal, yet they not only patiently bear with a wicked world through ſo many ages; but, what is more, liberally provide for it; and are you, who are juſt going off the ſtage, weary with bearing, tho' you are one of thoſe unhappy mortals yourſelf? *Id. Book* 7. § 70.

Never diſturb yourſelf; for men will do the ſame untoward actions over again, tho' you burſt with ſpleen. *Id Book* 8. § 4.

Reform an injurious perſon, if you can; if not, remember your patience was given you to bear with him. That the Gods patiently bear with ſuch men, and ſometimes beſtow upon them health, and fame, and fortune. *Id. Book.* 9. § 11.

When people treat you ill, and ſhow their ſpite, and ſlander you, enter into their little ſouls, go to the bottom of them, ſearch their underſtandings; and you will ſoon ſee, that nothing they may think or ſay of you need give you one troubleſome thought. *Id. Book* 9. § 27.

That is the beſt thing for a man which God ſends him; and that is the beſt time when he ſends it. *Book* 10. *ſec.* 2.

It is ſometimes a hard matter to be certain, whether you have received ill uſage or not; for mens actions oftentimes look worſe than they are: and one muſt be thoroughly informed of a great many things, before he can rightly judge. *Id. Book* 11. § 18.

Conſider how much more you often ſuffer from your anger and grief, than from thoſe very things for which you are angry and grieved. *Id. Book* 11. *ſec.* 18.

When you fancy that any one hath tranſgreſſed, ſay thus to yourſelf: 'How do I know it is a fault? But admit it 'is, it may be his conſcience hath corrected him: and then 'he hath received his puniſhment from himſelf.' *Book* 12.

To theſe I ſhall add two more quotations out of the ſacred writings, of incomparably greater weight and dignity than any of the aforementioned. *Prov.* xix. 11. *The diſcretion of a man deferreth his anger: and it is his glory to paſs over a tranſgreſſion.* Rom. xii. 20, 21. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Do

Do you not ſometimes find dull diſagreeable ideas annexed to certain places, ſeaſons, or employments, which give you a ſecret averſion to them? Theſe ariſe from the remembrance of ſome unpleaſing incidents you have heretofore met with, and which you apprehend may again befal you on ſuch occaſions. But they are often nothing more than the mere miſrepreſentations of fancy; and ought to be repelled, becauſe they will be apt to lead you to neglect the duties of your character.

If therefore you find in yourſelf a ſecret diſinclination to any particular action or duty, and the mind begins to caſt about for excuſes and reaſons to juſtify the neglect of it, — conſider the matter well: go to the bottom of that reluctance; and ſearch out what it is that gives the mind this averſion to it. Whether it be the thing or action itſelf, or ſome diſcouraging circumſtances that may attend it; or ſome diſagreeable conſequences that may poſſibly flow from it; or your ſuppoſed unfitneſs for it at preſent. Why, all theſe things may be only imaginary. And to neglect a plain and poſitive duty upon ſuch conſiderations, ſhows that you are governed by appearances more than realities, by fancy more than reaſon, and by inclination more than conſcience.

But let fancy muſter up all the diſcouraging circum-

circumſtances, and ſet them in the moſt formidable light, to bar your way to a ſuppoſed duty; for inſtance, 'It is very difficult, I want capacity; at leaſt am ſo indiſpoſed to it at preſent, that I ſhall make nothing of it; and then it will be attended with danger to my perſon, reputation, or peace; and the oppoſition I am like to meet with is great, &c.' But after all, is the call of Providence clear? is the thing a plain duty? ſuch as reaſon, conſcience, and ſcripture; your office, character, or perſonal engagements call upon you to diſcharge? If ſo, all the aforeſaid objections are vain and deluſive; and you have nothing to do but to ſummon your courage, and in dependance on divine help, to ſet about the buſineſs immediately and in good earneſt, and, in the beſt and wiſeſt manner you can; and you may depend upon it, you will find the greateſt difficulty to lie only in the firſt attempt; theſe frightful appearances to be all viſionary, the mere figments of fancy, turning lambs into lions, and mole-hills into mountains; — and that nothing but ſloth, folly and ſelf-indulgence, thus ſet your imagination on work to deter you from a plain duty. Your heart would deceive, but you have found out the cheat; and do not be impoſed upon *(i)*.

(i) "The wiſe and prudent conquer difficulties,
"By daring to attempt them. Sloth and folly
"Shiver and ſhrink at ſight of toil and danger,
"And make th'impoſſibility they fear." *Rowe.*

Again, ſuppoſe the thing done; conſider how it will look then. Take a view of it as paſt; and whatever pains it may coſt you, think whether it will not be abundantly recompenſed by the inward peace and pleaſure, which ariſe from a conſciouſneſs of having acted right. It certainly will. And the difficulties you now dread will enhance your future ſatisfaction *(k)*. But think again how you will bear the reflections of your own mind if you wilfully neglect a plain and neceſſary duty; whether this will not occaſion you much more trouble than all the pains you might be at in performing it. And a wiſe man will always determine himſelf by the end; or by ſuch a retroſpective view of things conſidered as paſt.

Again, on the other hand, if you find a ſtrong propenſion to any particular action, examine that with the like impartiality. Perhaps it is what neither your reaſon nor conſcience can fully approve. And yet every motive to it is ſtrongly urged, and every objection againſt it ſlighted. Senſe and appetite grow importunate and clamorous, and want to lead, while reaſon remonſtrates in vain. But turn not aſide from that faithful and friendly monitor, whilſt with a low, ſtill voice, ſhe addreſſes you in this ſoft but earneſt language: —— 'Hear me I beſeech you,

(k) — forſan et hæc olim meminiſſe juvabit. *Virg.*

'but

'but this one word more. The action is in-
'deed out of character; what I ſhall never ap-
'prove. The pleaſure of it is a great deal over-
'rated; you will certainly be diſappointed. It
'is a falſe appearance that now deceives you.
'And what will you think of yourſelf when it is
'paſt, and you come to reflect ſeriouſly on the
'matter? Believe it, you will then wiſh you had
'taken me for your counſellor, inſtead of thoſe
'enemies of mine, your luſts and paſſions, which
'have ſo often miſled you, tho'you know I ne-
'ver did.'——

Such ſhort recollections as theſe, and a little leiſure to take a view of the nature and conſequences of things or actions, before we reject or approve them, will prevent much falſe judgment and bad conduct; and by degrees wear off the prejudices which fancy has affixed in the mind either for or againſt any particular action; teach us to diſtinguiſh between things and their appearances; ſtrip them of thoſe falſe colours that ſo often deceive us; correct the ſallies of the imagination, and leave the reins in the hand of reaſon.

Before I diſmiſs this head, I muſt obſerve, that ſome of our ſtrongeſt prejudices ariſe from an exceſſive ſelf-eſteem, or too great a complacency in our own good ſenſe and underſtanding. Philautus in every thing ſhews himſelf well ſatisfied with

with his own wiſdom: which makes him very impatient of contradiction, and gives him a diſtaſte to all who ſhall preſume to oppoſe their judgment to his in any thing. He had rather perſevere in a miſtake than retract it, leſt his judgment ſhould ſuffer; not conſidering that his ingenuity and good ſenſe ſuffer much more by ſuch obſtinacy. The fulneſs of his ſelf-ſufficiency makes him blind to thoſe imperfections which every one can ſee in him but himſelf. So that, however wiſe, ſincere and friendly, however gentle and ſeaſonable your remonſtrance may be, he takes it immediately to proceed from ill-nature or ignorance in you, but from no fault in him.

Seneca, I remember, tells us a remarkable ſtory, which very well illuſtrates this matter. —— Writing to his friend Lucilius, 'My wife (ſays he) 'keeps Harpaſtes in her houſe ſtill, who, you 'know, is a ſort of family-fool, and no ſmall in-'cumbrance upon us. For my part, I am far 'from taking any pleaſure in ſuch prodigies. If 'I have a mind to divert myſelf with a fool, I 'have not far to go for one; I can laugh at my-'ſelf. This ſilly girl, all on a ſudden, loſt her 'eye-ſight; and (which perhaps may ſeem incre-'dible, but it is very true) ſhe does not know ſhe 'is blind; but is every now and then deſiring 'her governeſs to lead her abroad, ſaying the 'houſe is dark. — Now what we laugh at in this

'poor

'poor creature, you may obſerve happens to us 'all, No man knows that he is covetous, or in- 'ſatiable. Yet with this difference; the blind 'ſeek ſomebody to lead them, but we are content 'to wander without a guide. — But why do we 'thus deceive ourſelves? The diſeaſe is not with- 'out us, but fixed deep within. And therefore 'is the cure ſo difficult, becauſe we do not know 'that we are ſick *(l)*.'

CHAP. X.

The Neceſſity and Means of knowing our Natural Temper.

IX. ANOTHER very important branch of ſelf-knowledge is, the knowledge of thoſe governing paſſions or diſpoſitions of the mind, which generally form what we call a man's natural temper.

The difference of natural tempers ſeems to be chiefly owing to the different degrees of influence the ſeveral paſſions have upon the mind. *e. g.* If the paſſions are eager and ſoon raiſed, we ſay the man is of a warm temper: if more ſluggiſh and ſlowly raiſed, he is of a cool temper; according as anger, malice, or ambition prevail, he is of a fierce, churliſh, or haughty temper; the influence of the ſofter paſſions of love, pity,

(l) Sen. Epiſt. 52.

and

and benevolence forms a ſweet ſympathiſing and courteous temper; and when all the paſſions are duly poiſed, and the milder and pleaſing ones prevail, they make what is commonly called a quite good natured man.

So that it is the prevalence or predominance of any particular paſſion which gives the turn or tincture to a man's temper, by which he is diſtinguiſhed, and for which he is loved or eſteemed, or ſhunned and deſpiſed by others.

Now what this is, thoſe we converſe with are ſoon ſenſible of. They preſently ſee the fault of our temper, and order their behaviour accordingly. If they are wiſe and well mannered, they will avoid ſtriking the ſtring which they know will jar and raiſe a diſcord within us. If they are our enemies, they will do it on purpoſe to ſet us on tormenting ourſelves. And our friends we muſt ſuffer ſometimes with a gentle hand to touch it, either by way of pleaſant raillery or faithful advice.

But a man muſt be greatly unacquainted with himſelf, if he is ignorant of his predominant paſſion, or diſtinguiſhing temper, when every one elſe obſerves it. And yet how common is this piece of ſelf-ignorance? The two apoſtles Peter and John diſcovered it in that very action, wherein they meant to expreſs nothing but a hearty zeal for their Maſter's honour; which made

made him tell them, *that they knew not what manner of ſpirit they were of*, Luke ix. 55. that is, Inſtead of a principle of love and genuine zeal for him, they were at that time governed by a ſpirit of pride, revenge, and cruelty, and yet knew it not. And that the apoſtle John ſhould be liable to this cenſure, whoſe temper ſeemed to be all love and ſweetneſs, is a memorable inſtance how difficult a thing it is for a man at all times to know his own ſpirit; and that *that* paſſion, which ſeems to have the leaſt power over his mind, may on ſome occaſions inſenſibly gain a criminal aſcendant there.

The neceſſity of a perfect knowledge of our reigning paſſions appears further from hence; that they not only give a tincture to the temper, but to the underſtanding alſo; and throw a ſtrong bias on the judgment. They have much the ſame effect upon the eye of the mind, as ſome diſtempers have upon that of the body. If they do not put it out, they weaken it; or throw falſe colours before it, and make it form a wrong judgment of things. And, in ſhort, are the ſource of thoſe forementioned prejudices, which ſo often abuſe the human underſtanding.

Whatever the different paſſions themſelves that reign in the mind may be owing to, whether to the different texture of the bodily organs, or the different quantity or motion of the animal ſpirits,

or

or to the native turn and cast of the soul itself; yet certain it is, that mens different ways of thinking are much according to the predominance of their different passions; and especially with regard to religion. Thus, *e. g.* we see melancholy people are apt to throw too much gloom upon their religion, and represent it in a very uninviting and unlovely view, as all austerity and mortification: whilst they who are governed by the more gay and cheerful passions, are apt to run into the other extreme, and too much to mingle the pleasures of sense with those of religion; and are as much too lax as the other too severe. And thus by the prejudice or bias of their respective passions, or the force of their natural temper, they are led into different mistakes.

'So that would a man know himself, he must 'study his natural temper; his constitutional in-'clinations and favourite passions; for by these a 'man's judgment is easily perverted, and a wrong 'bias hung upon his mind: These are the inlets 'of prejudice; the unguarded avenues of the 'mind, by which a thousand errors and secret 'faults find admission, without being observed or 'taken notice of *(m)*.

And that we may more easily come at the knowledge of our predominant affections, let us

(m) Spectat. vol. vi. No. 393.

conſider what outward events do moſt impreſs and move us, and in what manner. What is it that uſually creates the greateſt pain or pleaſure in the mind? —— As for pain; a ſtoic indeed may tell us, 'that we muſt keep things at a diſ-'tance: let nothing that is outward come with-'in us; let externals be externals ſtill.' But the human make will ſcarce bear the rigour of that philoſophy. Outward things, after all, will impreſs and affect us: and there is no harm in this, provided they do not get the poſſeſſion of us, overſet our reaſon, or lead us to act unbecoming a man or a chriſtian. And one advantage we may reap from hence is, the manner or degree in which outward things impreſs us, may lead us into a better acquaintance with ourſelves, diſcover to us our weak ſide, and the paſſions which moſt predominate in us.

Our pleaſures will likewiſe diſcover our reigning paſſions, and the true temper and diſpoſition of the ſoul. If it be captivated by the pleaſures of ſin, it is a ſign its prevailing taſte is very vicious and corrupt; if with the pleaſures of ſenſe, very low and ſordid; if imaginary pleaſures, and the painted ſcenes of fancy and romance do moſt entertain it, the ſoul hath then a trifling turn; if the pleaſures of ſcience or intellectual improvements are thoſe it is moſt fond of, it has then a noble and refined taſte; but if its chief ſa-

tisfactions

tisfactions derive from religion and divine contemplation, it has then its true and proper taſte; its temper is at it ſhould be, pure, divine, and heavenly; provided theſe ſatisfactions ſpring from a true religious principle, free from that ſuperſtition, bigotry, and enthuſiaſm, under which it is often diſguiſed.

And thus by carefully obſerving what it is that gives the mind the greateſt pain and torment, or the greateſt pleaſure and entertainment, we come at the knowledge of its reigning paſſions, and prevailing temper and diſpoſition.

'Include thyſelf then, O my ſoul, within 'the compaſs of thine own heart; if it be not 'large, it is deep; and thou wilt there find ex-'erciſe enough. Thou wilt never be able to 'ſound it; it cannot be known, but by Him 'who tries the thoughts and reins. But dive 'into this ſubject as deep as thou canſt. Exa-'mine thyſelf; and this knowledge of that which 'paſſes within thee will be of more uſe to thee 'than the knowledge of all that paſſes in the world. 'Concern not thyſelf with the wars and quarrels 'of public or private perſons: take cognizance 'of thoſe conteſts which are between thy fleſh 'and thy ſpirit; betwixt the law of thy mem-'bers and that of thy underſtanding. Ap-'peaſe thoſe differences. Teach thy fleſh to be 'in ſubjection. Replace reaſon on its throne;

'and give it piety for its counſellor. Tame 'thy paſſions, and bring them under bond-'age. Put thy little ſtate in good order; 'govern wiſely and holily thoſe numerous peo-'ple which are contained in ſo little a kingdom; 'that is to ſay, that multitude of affections, 'thoughts, opinions, and paſſions, which are in 'thine heart (*n*).'

CHAP. XI.

Concerning the Secret Springs of our Actions.

X. ANOTHER conſiderable branch of ſelf-acquaintance is, to know the true motives and ſecret ſprings of our actions.

This will ſometimes coſt us much pains to acquire. But for want of it, we ſhall be in danger of paſſing a falſe judgment upon our actions, and of entertaining a wrong opinion of our conduct.

It is not only very poſſible, but very common for men to be ignorant of the chief inducements of their behaviour; and to imagine they act from one motive, whilſt they are apparently governed by another. If we examine our views, and look into our hearts narrowly, we ſhall find that they more frequently deceive us in this reſpect than we are aware of; by perſuading us that we are

(*n*) *Jurieu's Method of Chriſtian Devotion, part* iii. *chap.* iii.

governed

governed by much better motives than we really are. The honour of God, and the interest of religion, may be the open and avowed motive; whilst secular interest and secret vanity may be the hidden and true one. While we think we are serving God, we may be only sacrificing to Mammon. We may, like Jehu, boast our *zeal for the Lord*, when we are only animated by the heat of our natural passions (*o*); may cover a censorious spirit under a cloak of piety; and giving admonition to others, may be only giving vent to our spleen.

Many come to the place of public worship, out of custom or curiosity, who would be thought to come thither only out of conscience. And whilst their external and professed view is to serve God, and gain good to their souls, their secret and inward motive is only to shew themselves to advantage, or to avoid singularity, and prevent others making observations on their absence. Munificence and almsgiving may often proceed from a principle of pride and party-spirit; and seeming acts of friendship from a mercenary motive.

By thus disguising our motives, we may impose upon men; but at the same time we impose upon ourselves; and whilst we are deceiving others, our own hearts deceive us: and of all impostures,

(*o*) 2 *Kings* x. 16.

ſelf-deception is the moſt dangerous, becauſe leaſt ſuſpected.

Now, unleſs we examine this point narrowly, we ſhall never come to the bottom of it; and unleſs we come at the true ſpring and real motive of our actions, we ſhall never be able to form a right judgment of them; and they may appear very different in our own eye, and in the eye of the world, from what they do in the eye of God. *For the Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart* *. And hence it is, that *that* which is highly eſteemed among men, is oftentimes *abomination in the ſight of God* †. *Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts* ‡.

CHAP. XII.

Every one that knows himſelf is in a particular Manner ſenſible how far he is governed by a Thirſt for Applauſe.

XI. ANOTHER thing neceſſary to unfold a man's heart to himſelf is, to conſider what is his appetite for fame; and by what means he ſeeks to gratify it.

This paſſion in particular having always ſo main a ſtroke, and oftentimes ſo unſuſpected an influence on the moſt important parts of our con-

* 1 *Sam.* xvi. 7. † *Luke* xvi. 15. ‡ *Prov.* xxi. 2.

duct,

duct, a perfect acquaintance with it is a very material branch of self-knowledge, and therefore requires a distinct consideration.

Emulation, like the other passions of the human mind, shows itself much more plainly, and works much more strongly in some than it does in others. It is in itself innocent; and was planted in our natures for very wise ends, and, if kept under proper regulations, is capable of serving very excellent purposes, otherwise it degenerates into a mean and criminal ambition.

When a man finds something within him that pushes him on to excel in worthy deeds, or in actions truly good and virtuous, and pursues that design with a steady unaffected ardour, without reserve or falsehood, it is a true sign of a noble spirit; for that love of praise can never be criminal, that excites and enables a man to do a great deal more good than he could do without it. And perhaps there never was a fine genius, or a noble spirit, that rose above the common level, and distinguished itself by high attainments in what is truly excellent, but was secretly, and perhaps insensibly, prompted by the impulse of this passion.

But, on the contrary, if a man's views centre only in the applause of others, whether it be deserved or not; if he pants after popularity and fame, not regarding how he comes by it; if his

paſſion for praiſe urge him to ſtretch himſelf beyond the line of his capacity, and to attempt things to which he is unequal; to condeſcend to mean arts and low diſſimulation for the ſake of a name; and in a ſiniſter, indirect way, ſue hard for a little incenſe, not caring from whom he receives it; his ambition then becomes vanity. And if it excite a man to wicked attempts, make him willing to ſacrifice the eſteem of all wiſe and good men to the acclamations of a mob; to overleap the bounds of decency and truth, and break through the obligations of honour and virtue, it is then not only vanity, but vice; a vice the moſt deſtructive to the peace and happineſs of human ſociety, and which of all others hath made the greateſt havock and devaſtation among men.

What an inſtance have we here of the wide difference between common opinion and truth! That a vice ſo big with miſchief and miſery ſhould be miſtaken for a virtue! And that they who have been moſt infamous for it ſhould be crowned with laurels, even by thoſe who have been ruined by it; and have thoſe laurels perpetuated by the common conſent of men thro' after-ages! Seneca's judgment of Alexander is certainly more agreeable to truth than the common opinion; who called him "a public cut-throat "rather than a hero; and who, in ſeeking only

"to

" to be a terror to mankind, aroſe to no greater " an excellence than what belonged to the moſt " hurtful and hateful animals on earth" *(p)*.

Certain it is, that theſe falſe heroes who ſeek their glory from the deſtruction of their own ſpecies, are of all men moſt ignorant of themſelves; and by this wicked ambition entail infamy and curſes upon their name, inſtead of that immortal glory they purſued. According to the prophet's words, *Woe to him who coveteth an evil covetouſneſs to his houſe, that he may ſet his neſt on high; that he may be delivered from the power of evil. Thou haſt conſulted ſhame to thine houſe, by cutting off many people; and haſt ſinned againſt thy ſoul* (*q*).

Now

(*p*) Quid enim ſimile habebat veſanus adoleſcens, cui pro virtute erat felix temeritas? — Hic a pueritiâ latro, gentiumque vaſtator, tam hoſtium pernicies quam amicorum. Qui ſummum bonum duceret terori eſſe cunctis mortalibus: oblitus non ferociſſima tantûm, ſed ignaviſſima quoque animalia, timeri ob virus malum. *Sen. de Benef. cap.* 13.

How different from this is the judgment of Plutarch in this matter! who, in his *oration concerning the fortune and virtue of Alexander*, exalts him into a true hero; and juſtifies all the waſte he made of mankind, under (the ſame colour with which the Spaniards excuſed their inhuman barbarities towards the poor Indians, viz.) a pretence of civilizing them. And in attributing all his ſucceſs to his virtue, he talks more like a ſoldier ſerving under him in his wars, than an hiſtorian who lived many years afterwards, whoſe buſineſs it was to tranſmit his character impartially to future ages. And in whatever other reſpects Mr. Dryden may give the preference to Plutarch before Seneca (which he does with much zeal in his preface to Plutarch's Lives) yet it muſt be allowed that, in this inſtance at leaſt, the latter ſhows more of the philoſopher. See *Plut. Mor. vol.* i. *ad fin.*

(*q*) *Hab.* ii. 9, 10. — *that gaineth a wicked gain.*

Now no man can truly know himſelf till he be acquainted with this, which is ſo often the ſecret and unperceived ſpring of his actions, and obſerves how far it governs him in his converſation and conduct; virtue and real excellence will riſe to view, tho' they be not mounted on the wings of ambition; which, by ſoaring too high, procures but a more fatal fall.

And to correct the irregularity and extravagance of this paſſion, let us but reflect how airy and unſubſtantial a pleaſure the higheſt gratifications of it afford; how many cruel mortifications it expoſes us to, by awakening the envy of others; to what meanneſs it often makes us ſubmit; how frequently it loſeth its end by purſuing it with too much ardor; and how much more ſolid pleaſure the approbation of conſcience will yield than the acclamations of ignorant and miſtaken men, who, judging by externals only, cannot know our true character; and whoſe commendations a wiſe man would rather deſpiſe than court. 'Examine but the ſize of people's 'ſenſe, and the condition of their underſtand-'ing, and you will never be fond of popularity, 'nor afraid of cenſure; nor ſolicitous what judg-

> Oh ſons of earth! Attempt ye ſtill to riſe,
> By mountains pil'd on mountains, to the ſkies?
> Heav'n ſtill with laughter the vain toil ſurveys,
> And buries madmen in the heaps they raiſe.
> Who wickedly is wiſe, or madly brave,
> Is but the more a fool, or more a knave.
>
> *Pope's Eſſay on Man.*

'ment they may form of you, who know not how 'to judge rightly of themselves (*r*).

CHAP. XIII.

What Kind of Knowledge we are already furnished with, and what Degree of Esteem we set upon it.

XII. A MAN can never rightly know himself, unless he examines into his knowledge of other things.

We must consider then the knowledge we have; and whether we do not set too high a price upon it, and too great a value upon ourselves on its account; of what real use it is of, and what effect it has upon us; whether it does not make us too stiff, unsociable, and assuming; testy and supercilious, and ready to despise others for their supposed ignorance. If so, our knowledge, be it what it will, does us more harm than good. We were better without it; ignorance itself would not render us so ridiculous. Such a temper, with all our knowledge, shows that we know not ourselves.

'A man is certainly proud of that knowledge 'he despises others for the want of.'

How common is it for some men to be fond of appearing to know more than they do, and of seeming to be thought men of knowledge! To

(*r*) Διελθε εσω εις τα ηγεμονικα αμτον, και οψει τινας κριτας Φοβη οιους και περι αυτων οντας κριτας. *Mark Ant. lib.* 9. *sec.* 18.

which end they exhauſt their fund almoſt in all companies, to outſhine the reſt. So that in two or three converſations they are drawn dry, and you ſee to the bottom of them much ſooner than you could at firſt imagine. And even that torrent of learning, which they pour out upon you at firſt ſo unmercifully, rather confounds than ſatisfies you; their viſible aim is not to inform your judgment, but diſplay their own; you have many things to query and except againſt; but their loquacity gives you no room; and their good ſenſe, ſet off to ſo much advantage, ſtrikes a modeſt man dumb. If you inſiſt upon your right to examine, they retreat, either in confuſion or equivocation; and, like the ſcuttle-fiſh, throw a large quantity of ink behind them, that you may not ſee where to purſue. Whence this foible flows is obvious enough. Self-knowledge would ſoon correct it.

But as ſome ignorantly affect to be more knowing, ſo others vainly affect to be more ignorant than they are; who to ſhew they have greater inſight and penetration than other men, inſiſt upon the abſolute uncertainty of ſcience; will diſpute even firſt principles; grant nothing as certain, and ſo run it into downright pyrrhoniſm; the too common effect of abſtracted debates exceſſively refined *(s)*. Every

(s) Socrates's ſaying, Nihil ſe ſcire, niſi id ipſum, ſavoured of an affected humility. But they that followed went further; and

Every one is apt to ſet the greateſt value upon that kind of knowledge in which he imagines he himſelf moſt excels; and to undervalue all other in compariſon of it. There wants ſome certain rule then, by which every man's knowledge is to be tried, and the value of it eſtimated. And let it be this. ——— "That is the beſt "and moſt valuable kind of knowledge, that "is moſt ſubſervient to the beſt ends; *i. e.* which "tends to make a man wiſer and better, or more "agreeable and uſeful both to himſelf and "others." ——— For knowledge is but a mean that relates to ſome end. And as all means are to be judged of by the excellency of the end, and their expediency to produce it; ſo that muſt be the beſt knowledge that hath the directeſt tendency to promote the beſt ends; viz. a man's own true happineſs, and that of others; in which the glory of God, the ultimate end, is ever neceſſarily compriſed.

Now, if we were to judge of the ſeveral kinds of ſcience by this rule, we ſhould find, (1.) Some of them to be very hurtful and pernicious; as tending to pervert the true end of knowledge; to ruin a man's own happineſs, and make him

and particularly Arceſilas, Negabat eſſe quicquam, quod ſciri poteſt; ne illud quidem ipſum quod Socrates ſibi reliquiſſet. And thus the abſurdity grew to a ſize that was monſtrous. *For to know that one knows nothing, is a contradiction. And not to know that he knows even that, is not to know but that he may know ſomething. Relig. of Nat. delin. pag.* 40.

more

more injurious to ſociety. Such is the knowledge of vice, the various temptations to it, and the ſecret ways of practiſing it, eſpecially the arts of diſſimulation, fraud, and diſhoneſty. (2) Others will be found unprofitable and uſeleſs. As thoſe parts of knowledge, which tho' they may take up much time and pains to acquire, yet anſwer no valuable purpoſe; and ſerve only for amuſement, and the entertainment of the imagination. For inſtance, an acquaintance with plays, novels, games, and modes, in which a man may be very critical and expert, and yet not a whit the wiſer or more uſeful man. (3.) Other kinds of knowledge are good only relatively, or conditionally, and may be more uſeful to one than to another; viz. a ſkill in a man's particular occupation or calling, on which his credit, livelihood, or uſefulneſs in the world depends. And as this kind of knowledge is valuable in proportion to its ends, ſo it ought to be cultivated with a diligence and eſteem anſwerable to that. (Laſtly,) Other kinds of knowledge are good abſolutely and univerſally; viz. the knowledge of God and ourſelves; the nature of our final happineſs, and the way to it. This is equally neceſſary to all. And how thankful ſhould we be, that we who live under the light of the goſpel, and enjoy that light in its perfection and purity, have ſo many happy means and opportunities

of

of attaining this moſt uſeful and neceſſary kind of knowledge!

A man can never underſtand himſelf then, till he makes a right eſtimate of his knowledge; till he examines what kind of knowledge he values himſelf moſt upon, and moſt diligently cultivates; how high a value he ſets upon it; what good it does him; what effect it hath upon him; what he is the better for it; what end it anſwers now; or what it is like to anſwer hereafter.

There is nothing in which a man's ſelf-ignorance diſcovers itſelf more, than in the eſteem he hath for his underſtanding, or for himſelf on the account of it. It is a trite and a true obſervation, 'that empty things make the moſt ſound.' Men of the leaſt knowledge are moſt apt to make a ſhow of it, and to value themſelves upon it; which is very viſible in forward confident youth, raw conceited academics, and thoſe who, uneducated in their childhood, betake themſelves in later life to reading, without taſte or judgment, only as an accompliſhment, and to make a ſhow of ſcholarſhip; who have juſt learning enough to ſpoil company, and render themſelves ridiculous; but not enough to make either themſelves or others at all the wiſer.

But beſide the forementioned kinds of knowledge, there is another, which is commonly called falſe knowledge; which tho' it often impoſes upon

upon men, under the ſhow and ſemblance of true knowledge, is really worſe than ignorance. Some men have learned a great many things, and have taken a great deal of pains to learn them, and ſtand very high in their own opinion on account of them, which yet they muſt unlearn before they are truly wiſe. They have been at a vaſt expence of time, and pains, and patience, to heap together, and to confirm themſelves in a ſet of wrong notions, which they lay up in their minds as a fund of valuable knowledge; which, if they try by the forementioned rules, viz. "The tendency they have to make "them wiſer and better, or more uſeful and be-"neficial to others," will be found to be worth juſt nothing at all.

Beware of this falſe knowledge. For as there is nothing of which men are more obſtinately tenacious, ſo there is nothing that renders them more vain, or more averſe to ſelf-knowledge. Of all things, men are moſt fond of their wrong notions.

The apoſtle Paul often ſpeaks of theſe men, and their ſelf-ſufficiency, in very poignant terms; who, *tho' they ſeem wiſe, yet* (ſays he) *muſt become fools before they are wiſe* *. Tho' they think they know a great deal, *know nothing yet as they ought to know* †; *but deceive themſelves, by thinking themſelves ſomething*

* 1 *Cor.* iii. 18. † 1 *Cor.* viii. 2.

when

when they are nothing ‡. And whilſt they deſire to be teachers of others, *underſtand not what they ſay, nor whereof they affirm* §: *and want themſelves to be taught what are the firſt rudiments and principles of wiſdom* ‖.

CHAP. XIV.

Concerning the Knowledge, Guard, and Government of our Thoughts.

XIII. ANOTHER part of ſelf-knowledge conſiſts in a due acquaintancee with our own thoughts, and the inward workings of the imagination.

The right government of the thoughts requires no ſmall art, vigilance, and reſolution. But it is a matter of ſuch vaſt importance to the peace and improvement of the mind, that it is worth while to be at ſome pains about it. A man that hath ſo numerous and turbulent a family to govern as his own thoughts, which are too apt to be at the command of his paſſions and appetites, ought not to be long from home. If he be, they will ſoon grow mutinous and diſorderly under the conduct of thoſe two headſtrong guides, and raiſe great clamours and diſturbances, and ſometimes on the ſlighteſt occaſions. And a more dreadful ſcene of miſery can hardly be imagined, than that which is occaſioned by ſuch a

‡ *Gal.* vi. 3. § 1 *Tim.* i. 7. ‖ *Heb.* v. 12.

tumult

tumult and uproar within, when a raging conſcience or inflamed paſſions are let looſe, without check or control. A city in flames, or the mutiny of a drunken crew aboard, who have murdered the captain, and are butchering one another, are but faint emblems of it. The torment of the mind, under ſuch an inſurrection and ravage of the paſſions, is not eaſy to be conceived. The moſt revengeful man cannot wiſh his enemy a greater.

Of what vaſt importance then is it for a man to watch over his thoughts, in order to a right government of them! to conſider what kind of thoughts find the eaſieſt admiſſion; in what manner they inſinuate themſelves, and upon what occaſions.

It was an excellent rule which a wiſe heathen preſcribed to himſelf, in his private meditations: *Manage* (ſaith he) *all your actions and thoughts in ſuch a manner, as if you were juſt going out of the world (t).* Again (ſaith he) *A man is ſeldom, if ever, unhappy for not knowing the thoughts of others; but he that does not attend to the motions of his own, is certainly miſerable (u).* It

(t) *Marc. Anton. Medit.* lib. 2. § 11.

(u) *Marc. Anton.* lib. 2. *ſec.* 8.

" Nothing can be more unhappy than that man who ranges " every where, ranſacks every thing, digs into the bowels of " the earth, dives into other mens boſoms, but does not con- " ſider all the while that his own mind will afford him ſuffi- " cient ſcope for enquiry and entertainment; and that the care " and improvement of himſelf will give him buſineſs enough. *Id. lib.* 2. *ſec.* 13.

It may be worth our while then to diſcuſs this matter a little more preciſely, and conſider (1.) what kind of thoughts are to be excluded or rejected; and (2.) what ought to be indulged and entertained.

I. Some thoughts ought to be immediately baniſhed as ſoon as they have found entrance.—— And if we are often troubled with them, the ſafeſt way will be to keep a good guard on the avenues of the mind by which they enter, and avoid thoſe occaſions which commonly excite them. For ſometimes it is much eaſier to prevent a bad thought entering the mind, than to get rid of it when it is entered. —— More particularly,

(1.) Watch againſt all fretful and diſcontented thoughts, which do but chafe and corrode the mind to no purpoſe. To harbour theſe is to do yourſelf more injury than it is in the power of your greateſt enemy to do you. It is equally a chriſtian's intereſt and duty to *learn, in whatever ſtate he is, therewith to be content* *.

(2.) Harbour not too anxious and apprehenſive thoughts. By giving way to tormenting fears, ſuſpicions of ſome approaching danger or troubleſome event, we not only anticipate, but dou-

" Your diſpoſition will be ſuitable to that which you moſt " frequently think on; for the ſoul is, as it were, tinged " with the colour and complexion of its own thoughts.

Id. lib. 5. *ſec.* 16.

* Phil. iv. 11.

ble

ble the evil we fear; and undergo much more from the apprehenſion of it before it comes, than from the whole weight of it when preſent. This is a great, but common weakneſs; which a man ſhould endeavour to arm himſelf againſt by ſuch kind of reflections as theſe; ——— "Are not all "theſe events under the certain direction of a "wiſe Providence? If they befal me, they are "then that ſhare of ſuffering which God hath "appointed me; and which he expects I ſhould "bear as a chriſtian. How often hath my too "timorous heart magnified former trials! which "I found to be leſs in reality than they appeared "upon their approach. And perhaps the formi-"dable aſpect they put on, is only a ſtratagem of "the great enemy of my beſt intereſt, deſigned on "purpoſe to divert me from ſome point of duty, "or to draw me into ſome ſin, to avoid them. "However, why ſhould I torment myſelf to no "purpoſe? The pain and affliction the dreaded "evil will give me when it comes, is of God's "ſending; the pain I feel in the apprehenſion of "it before it comes, is of my own procuring. "Whereby I often make my ſufferings more than "double; for this overplus of them, which I "bring upon myſelf, is often greater than that "meaſure of them which the hand of Providence "immediately brings upon me."

(3.) Diſmiſs, as ſoon as may be, all angry and wrathful

wrathful thoughts. Theſe will but canker and corrode the mind, and diſpoſe it to the worſt temper in the world, viz. that of fixed malice and revenge. Anger may ſteal into the heart of a wiſe man; but it *reſts only in the boſom of fools* *. Make all the moſt candid allowances for the offender. Conſider his natural temper. Turn your anger into pity. Repeat 1 Cor. xiii. Think of the patience and meekneſs of Chriſt, and the petition of the Lord's Prayer; and how much you ſtand in need of forgiveneſs yourſelf, both from God and man; how fruitleſs, how fooliſh is indulged reſentment; how tormenting to yourſelf! You have too much good-nature willingly to give others ſo much torment; and why ſhould you give it yourſelf? You are commanded to love your neighbour as yourſelf; but not forbidden to love yourſelf as much. And why ſhould you do yourſelf that injury, which your enemy would be glad to do you †?

But, above all, be ſure to ſet a guard on the tongue, whilſt the fretful mood is upon you. The leaſt ſpark may break out into a conflagra

* Eccleſ, vii. 9.

† The chriſtian precept in this caſe is, *Let not the ſun go down upon your wrath*, Eph. iv. 26. And this precept, Plutarch tells us, the Pythagoreans practiſed in a literal ſenſe;—"who, if at any time in a paſſion they broke out into oppro-"brious language, before ſun-ſet gave one another their "hands, and with them a diſcharge from all injuries; and ſo "with a mutual reconciliation parted friends." *Plut. Mor.*

tion,

tion, when cheriſhed by a reſentful heart, and fanned by the wind of an angry breath. Aggravating expreſſions at ſuch a time, are like oil thrown upon flames, which always make them rage the more (*u*). Eſpecially,

(4.) Baniſh all malignant and revengeful thoughts. A ſpirit of revenge is the very ſpirit of the Devil; than which nothing makes a man more like him; and nothing can be more oppoſite to the temper which chriſtianity was deſigned to promote. If your revenge be not ſatisfied, it will give you torment now; if it be, it will give you greater hereafter. None is a greater ſelf-tormentor than a malicious and revengeful man, who turns the poiſon of his own temper in upon himſelf (*x*).

(5.) Drive from the mind all ſilly, trifling, and unreaſonable thoughts; which ſometimes get into it we know not how, and ſeize and poſſeſs it before we are aware; and hold it in empty, idle amuſements, that yield it neither pleaſure nor profit, and turn to no manner of account in the world; only conſume time, and prevent a better

(*u*) Αγαθον μεν εϛι εν πυρεῖω, δε εν οργη την γλωτταν απαλην εχειν και λειαν. *Plutarch. de Ira Cohiben.* It is good in a fever, much better in anger, to have the tongue kept clean and ſmooth.

(*x*) Malitia ipſa maximam partem veneni ſui bibit.—Illud venenum quod ſerpentes in alienam perniciem proferunt, ſine ſuâ continent. Non eſt huic ſimile; hoc habentibus peſſimum eſt. *Sen. Epiſt.* 82.

employment

employment of the mind. And indeed there is little difference whether we ſpend the time in ſleep, or in theſe waking dreams. Nay, if the thoughts which thus inſenſibly ſteal upon you be not altogether abſurd and whimſical, yet if they be impertinent and unſeaſonable, they ought to be diſmiſſed, becauſe they keep out better company.

(6.) Caſt out all wild and extravagant thoughts, all vain and fantaſtical imaginations. Suffer not your thoughts to roam upon things that never were, and perhaps never will be; to give you a viſionary pleaſure in the proſpect of what you have not the leaſt reaſon to hope, or a needleſs pain in the apprehenſion of what you have not the leaſt reaſon to fear. — The truth is, next to a clear conſcience and a ſound judgment, there is not a greater bleſſing than a regular and well-governed imagination; to be able to view things as they are, in their true light and proper colours; and to diſtinguiſh the falſe images that are painted on the fancy, from the repreſentations of truth and reaſon. For how common a thing is it for men, before they are aware, to confound reaſon and fancy, truth and imagination together! To take the flaſhes of the animal ſpirits for the light of evidence! and think they believe things to be true or falſe, when they only fancy them to be ſo! and fancy them to be ſo, becauſe they would have

have them ſo! not conſidering that mere fancy is only the *ignis fatuus* of the mind; which often appears brighteſt when the mind is moſt covered with darkneſs; and will be ſure to lead them aſtray who follow it as their guide. Near akin to theſe are,

(7.) Romantic and chimerical thoughts. By which I mean that kind of wild-fire, which the briſkneſs of the animal ſpirits ſometimes ſuddenly flaſhes on the mind, and excites images that are ſo extremely ridiculous and abſurd, that one can ſcarce forbear wondering how they could get admittance. Theſe random flights of the fancy are ſoon gone; and herein differ from that caſtle-building of the imagination before-mentioned, which is a more ſettled amuſement. But theſe are too incoherent and ſenſeleſs to be of long continuance; and are the maddeſt ſallies, and the moſt ramping reveries of the fancy that can be. — I know not whether my reader underſtands now what I mean; but if he attentively regards all that paſſes through his mind, perhaps he may hereafter by experience.

(8) Repel all impure and laſcivious thoughts, which taint and pollute the mind; and tho' hid from men, are known to God, in whoſe eye they are abominable. Our Saviour warns us againſt theſe, as a kind of ſpiritual fornication *, and

* Matt. v. 28.

inconſiſtent

inconſiſtent with that purity of heart which his goſpel requires.

(9.) Take care how you too much indulge gloomy and melancholy thoughts. Some are diſpoſed to ſee every thing in the worſt light. A black cloud hangs hovering over their minds; which, when it falls in ſhowers through their eyes, is diſperſed, and all within is ſerene again. This is often purely mechanical; and owing either to ſome fault in the bodily conſtitution, or ſome accidental diſorder in the animal frame. However, one that conſults the peace of his own mind will be upon his guard againſt this, which ſo often robs him of it.

(10.) On the other hand, let not the imagination be too ſprightly and triumphant. Some are as unreaſonably exalted as others are depreſſed; and the ſame perſon at different times often runs into both extremes, according to the different temper and flow of the animal ſpirits. And, therefore, the thoughts, which ſo eagerly crowd into the mind at ſuch times, ought to be ſuſpected and well guarded, otherwiſe they will impoſe upon our judgments, and lead us to form ſuch a notion of ourſelves and of things, as we ſhall ſoon ſee fit to alter, when the mind is in a more ſettled and ſedate frame.

Before we let our thoughts judge of things, we muſt ſet Reaſon to judge our thoughts; for they

are not always in a proper condition to execute that office. We do not believe the character which a man gives us of another, unleſs we have a good opinion of his own; ſo neither ſhould we believe the verdict which the mind pronounces, till we firſt examine whether it be impartial and unbiaſſed; whether it be in a proper temper to judge, and have proper lights to judge by. The want of this previous act of ſelf-judgment, is the cauſe of much ſelf-deception and falſe judgment.

(Laſtly.) With abhorrence reject immediately all profane and blaſphemous thoughts; which are ſometimes ſuddenly injected into the mind, we know not how, tho' we may give a pretty good gueſs from whence. And all thoſe thoughts which are apparently temptations and inducements to ſin, our Lord hath, by his example, taught us to treat in this manner *.

Theſe then are the thoughts we ſhould carefully guard againſt.———And as they will (eſpecially ſome of them) be frequently inſinuating themſelves into the heart, remember to ſet Reaſon at the door of it to guard the paſſage, and bar their entrance, or drive them out forthwith when entered; not only as impertinent, but miſchievous intruders.

But, II. There are other kinds of thoughts which we ought to indulge, and with great care and diligence retain and improve.

* *Matt.* iv. 10.

What-

Whatever thoughts give the mind a rational or religious pleaſure, and tend to improve the heart and underſtanding, are to be favoured, often recalled, and carefully cultivated. Nor ſhould we diſmiſs them, till they have made ſome impreſſions on the mind, which are like to abide there.

And to bring the mind into a habit of recovering, retaining, and improving, ſuch thoughts, two things are neceſſary.

(1.) To habituate ourſelves to a cloſe and rational way of thinking. And, (2.) To moral reflections and religious contemplations.

(1.) To prepare and diſpoſe the mind for the entertainment of good and uſeful thoughts, we muſt take care to accuſtom it to a cloſe and rational way of thinking.

When you have ſtarted a good thought, purſue it; do not preſently loſe ſight of it, or ſuffer any trifling ſuggeſtion that may intervene to divert you from it. Diſmiſs it not till you have ſifted and exhauſted it; and well conſidered the ſeveral conſequences and inferences that reſult from it. However, retain not the ſubject any longer than you find your thoughts run freely upon it; for to confine them to it when it is quite worn out, is to give them an unnatural bent, without ſufficient employment; which will make them flag, or be more apt to run off to ſomething elſe.

And to keep the mind intent on the ſubject you think of, you muſt be at ſome pains to recal and refix your deſultory and rambling thoughts. Lay open the ſubject in as many lights and views as it is capable of being repreſented in. Clothe your beſt ideas in pertinent and well-choſen words, deliberately pronounced; or commit them to writing.

Whatever be the ſubject, admit of no inferences from it, but what you ſee plain and natural. This is the way to furniſh the mind with true and ſolid knowledge. As, on the contrary, falſe knowledge proceeds from not underſtanding the ſubject, or drawing inferences from it which are forced and unnatural, and allowing to thoſe precarious inferences, or conſequences drawn from them, the ſame degree of credibility as to the moſt rational and beſt eſtabliſhed principles.

Beware of a ſuperficial, ſlight, or confuſed view of things. Go to the bottom of them, and examine the foundation; and be ſatisfied with none but clear and diſtinct ideas (when they can be had) in every thing you read, hear, or think of. For reſting in imperfect and obſcure ideas, is the ſource of much confuſion and miſtake.

Accuſtom yourſelf to ſpeak naturally, pertinently, and rationally, on all ſubjects, and you will ſoon learn to think ſo on the beſt; eſpecially if you

you often converſe with thoſe perſons that ſpeak, and thoſe authors that write, in that manner.

Such a regulation and right management of your thoughts and rational powers will be of great and general advantage to you in the purſuit of youthful knowledge, and a good guard againſt the levities and frantic ſallies of the imagination. Nor will you be ſenſible of any diſadvantage attending it, excepting one, viz. its making you more ſenſible of the weakneſs and ignorance of others, who are often talking in a random, inconſequential manner; and whom it may oftentimes be more prudent to bear with than contradict. But the vaſt benefit this method will be of in tracing out truth and detecting error, and the ſatisfaction it will give you in the cool and regular exerciſes of ſelf-employment, and in the retaining, purſuing, and improving good and uſeful thoughts, will more than compenſate that petty diſadvantage.

(2.) If we would have the mind furniſhed and entertained with good thoughts, we muſt inure it to moral and religious ſubjects.

It is certain the mind cannot be more nobly and uſefully employed than in ſuch kind of contemplations; becauſe the knowledge it thereby acquires, is of all others the moſt excellent knowledge; and that both in regard of its object and its end; the object of it being God, and the end of it eternal happineſs.

The great end of religion is to make us like God, and conduct us to the enjoyment of him. And whatever hath not this plain tendency, and eſpecially if it have the contrary, men may call Religion (if they pleaſe), but they cannot call it more out of its name. And whatever is called religious knowledge, if it does not direct us in the way to this end, is not religious knowledge, but ſomething elſe falſely ſo called. And ſome are unhappily accuſtomed to ſuch an abuſe of words and underſtanding, as not only to call, but to think thoſe things, religion, which are quite the reverſe of it; and thoſe notions, religious knowledge, which lead them the fartheſt from it.

The ſincerity of a true religious principle cannot be better known than by the readineſs with which the thoughts advert to God, and the pleaſure with which they are employed in devout exerciſes. And though a perſon may not always be ſo well pleaſed with hearing religious things talked of by others, whoſe different taſte, ſentiments, or manner of expreſſion may have ſomething diſagreeable; yet if he have no inclination to think of them himſelf, or to converſe with himſelf about them, he hath great reaſon to ſuſpect that his heart is not right with God. But if he frequently and delightfully exerciſe his mind in divine contemplations, it will not only be a good mark of his ſincerity, but will

will habitually diſpoſe it for the reception of the beſt and moſt uſeful thoughts, and fit it for the nobleſt entertainments.

Upon the whole, then, it is of as great importance for a man to take heed what thoughts he entertains as what company he keeps; for they have the ſame effect upon the mind. Bad thoughts are as infectious as bad company; and good thoughts ſolace, inſtruct, and entertain the mind, like good company. And this is one great advantage of retirement, that a man may chuſe what company he pleaſes from within himſelf.

As in the world we oftener light into bad company than good, ſo in ſolitude we are oftener troubled with impertinent and unprofitable thoughts than entertained with agreeable and uſeful ones: and a man that hath ſo far loſt the command of himſelf, as to lie at the mercy of every fooliſh or vexing thought, is much in the ſame ſituation as an hoſt, whoſe houſe is open to all comers; whom, tho' ever ſo noiſy, rude, and troubleſome, he cannot get rid of; but with this difference, that the latter hath ſome recompence for his trouble, the former none at all; but is robbed of his peace and quiet for nothing.

Of ſuch vaſt importance to the peace, as well as the improvement of the mind, is the right regulation of the thoughts: which will be my apology for dwelling ſo long on this branch of

the ſubject; which I ſhall conclude with this one obſervation more; that it is a very dangerous thing to think, as too many are apt to do, that it is a matter of indifference what thoughts they entertain in their hearts; ſince the reaſon of things concurs with the teſtimony of the holy ſcriptures to aſſure us, *that the allowed thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin** (x).

CHAP. XV.

Concerning the Memory.

XIV. A MAN that knows himſelf will have a regard not only to the management of his thoughts, but the improvement of his memory.

The memory is that faculty of the ſoul, which was deſigned for the ſtore-houſe or repoſitory of its moſt uſeful notions; where they may be laid up in ſafety, to be produced upon proper occaſions.

Now a thorough ſelf-acquaintance cannot be had without a proper regard to this, in two reſpects. (1.) Its furniture. (2.) Its improvement.

(1.) A man that knows himſelf will have a

* *Prov.* xxiv. 9.

(x) Nam ſcelus inter ſe tacitum qui cogitat ullum
Facti crimen habet. *Juv. Sat.* 13.
Guard well thy thoughts: our thoughts are heard in heav'n.
Young.

regard

regard to the furniture of his memory; not to load it with traſh and lumber, a ſet of uſeleſs notions or low conceits, which he will be aſhamed to produce before perſons of taſte and judgment.

If the retention be bad, do not crowd it; it is of as ill conſequence to overload a weak memory as a weak ſtomach. And that it may not be cumbered with traſh, take heed what company you keep, what books you read, and what thoughts you favour; otherwiſe a great deal of uſeleſs rubbiſh may fix there before you are aware, and take up the room which ought to be poſſeſſed by better notions. But let not a valuable thought ſlip from you, though you purſue it with much time and pains before you overtake it; the regaining and refixing it, may be of more avail to you than many hours reading.

What pity it is that men ſhould take ſuch immenſe pains, as ſome do, to learn thoſe things which, as ſoon as they become wiſe, they muſt take as much pains to unlearn!—A thought that ſhould make us very curious and cautious about the proper furniture of our minds.

(2.) Self-knowledge will acquaint a man with the extent and capacity of his memory, and the right way to improve it *(y)*. There

(y) Tribus rebus potiſſimum conſtat optima memoria, intellectu, Ordine, Cura, ſiquidem bona memoriæ pars eſt rem penitus

There is no ſmall art in improving a weak memory, ſo as to turn it to as great an advantage as many do theirs which are much ſtronger. A few ſhort rules to this purpoſe may be no unprofitable digreſſion.

(1.) Beware of every ſort of intemperance in the indulgence of the appetites and paſſions. Exceſſes of all kinds do a great injury to the memory.

(2.) If it be weak, do not overload it. Charge it only with the moſt uſeful and ſolid notions. A ſmall veſſel ſhould not be ſtuffed with lumber. But if its freight be precious, and judiciouſly ſtowed, it may be more valuable than a ſhip of twice its burthen.

(3.) Recur to the help of a common-place-book, according to Mr. Locke's method; and review it once a year. But take care that by confiding to your minutes or memorial aids, you do not excuſe the labour of the memory; which is one diſadvantage attending this method.

(4.) Take every opportunity of uttering your beſt thoughts in converſation, when the ſubject will admit it; that will deeply imprint them.

penitus intellexiſſe; tum Ordo facit, ut quæ ſemel excideren, quaſi poſtliminio in animum revocamus; porro Cura omnibus in rebus, non hic tantum plurimum valet. *Eraſm. de rat. ſtud. ad calc. Ringelbergii, p.* 168.

Hence

Hence the tales which common ſtory-tellers relate, they never forget, tho' ever ſo ſilly (*z*).

(5.) Join to the idea you would remember ſome other that is more familiar to you, which bears ſome ſimilitude to it, either in its nature, or in the ſound of the word by which it is expreſſed; or that hath ſome relation to it either in time or place. And then by recalling this, which is eaſily remembered, you will (by that concatenation, or connection of ideas, which Mr. Locke takes notice of) draw in that which is thus linked or joined with it; which otherwiſe you might hunt after in vain.——This rule is of excellent uſe to help you to remember names.

(6.) What you are determined to remember, think of before you go to ſleep at night, and the firſt thing in the morning, when the faculties are freſh; and recollect at evening every thing worth remembering the day paſt.

(7.) Think it not enough to furniſh this ſtore-houſe of the mind with good thoughts, but lay them up there in order, digeſted or ranged under proper ſubjects or claſſes; that whatever ſub-

(*z*) Quicquid didiceris id confeſtim doceas; ſic et tua firmare, et prodeſſe aliis potes. *Ringelbergius de ratione ſtudii, p.* 28.

Poſtremo illud non ad unum aliquid, ſed ad omnia ſimul plurimum conducet, ſi frequenter alios quoque doceas. Nuſquam enim melius deprehenderis quid intelliges, quid non. Atque interim nova quæque occurrunt, commentanti diſſerentique, nihil non altius infigitur animo. *Eraſm. Rot. de rat. ſtud. p.* 179.

ject

ject you have occaſion to think or talk upon you may have recourſe immediately to a good thought which you heretofore laid up there under that ſubject. So that the very mention of the ſubject may bring the thought to hand; by which means you will carry a regular common-place-book in your memory. And it may not be amiſs ſometimes to take an inventory of this mental furniture, and recollect how many good thoughts you have treaſured up under ſuch particular ſubjects, and whence you had them.

(Laſtly,) Nothing helps the memory more than often thinking, writing, or talking on thoſe ſubjects you would remember.———But enough of this.

CHAP. XVI.

Concerning the Mental Taſte.

XV. A MAN that knows himſelf, is ſenſible of, and attentive to the particular taſte of his mind, eſpecially in matters of religion.

As the late Mr. Howe judiciouſly obſerves, 'there is beſide bare underſtanding and judg-'ment, and diverſe from that heavenly gift, 'which in the ſcripture is called grace, ſuch a 'thing as guſt and reliſh belonging to the mind 'of man, (and, I doubt not, with all men, if 'they obſerve themſelves) and which are as un-'accountable

'accountable and as various as the reliſhes and 'diſguſts of ſenſe. This they only wonder at 'who underſtand not themſelves, or will conſider 'nobody but themſelves.——So that it cannot 'be ſaid univerſally, that it is a better judgment, 'or more grace that determines men the one 'way or the other; but ſomewhat in the tem-'per of their minds diſtinct from both, which 'I know not how better to expreſs than by 'mental taſte.———And this hath no more of 'myſtery in it, than that there is ſuch a thing 'belonging to our natures as complacency and 'diſplicency in reference to the objects of the 'mind. And this, in the kind of it, is as com-'mon to men as human nature; but as much di-'verſified in individuals as mens other inclina-'tions are' *(a)*.

Now this different taſte in matters relating to religion (tho' it may be ſometimes natural, or what is born with a man, yet) generally ariſes from the difference of education and cuſtom. And the true reaſon why ſome perſons have an inveterate diſreliſh to certain circumſtantials of religion, tho' ever ſo juſtifiable, and at the ſame time a fixed eſteem for others that are more exceptionable, may be no better than what I have heard ſome very honeſtly profeſs, viz. that the one they have been uſed to, and the other not. As a

(a) See his humble requeſt both to conformiſts and diſſenters.

perſon

perſon by long uſe and habit acquires a greater reliſh for coarſe and unwholeſome food than the moſt delicate diet; ſo a perſon long habituated to a ſet of phraſes, notions, and modes, may, by degrees, come to have ſuch a veneration and eſteem for them, as to deſpiſe and condemn others which they have not been accuſtomed to, tho' perhaps more edifying, and more agreeable to ſcripture and reaſon.

This particular taſte in matters of religion differs very much (as Mr. Howe well obſerves) both from judgment and grace.

However, it is often miſtaken for both: when it is miſtaken for the former, it leads to error; when miſtaken for the latter, to cenſoriouſneſs.

This different taſte of mental objects is much the ſame with that, which with regard to the objects of ſenſe we call fancy; for as one man cannot be ſaid to have a better judgment in food than another, purely becauſe he likes ſome kind of meats better than he; ſo neither can he be ſaid to have a better judgment in matters of religion, purely becauſe he hath a greater fondneſs for ſome particular doctrines and forms.

But though this mental taſte be not the ſame as the judgment, yet it often draws the judgment to it; and ſometimes very much perverts it.

This appears in nothing more evidently than in the judgment people paſs upon the ſermons they

they hear. Some are beſt pleaſed with thoſe diſcourſes that are pathetic and warming; others with what is more ſolid and rational; and others with the ſublime and myſtical; nothing can be too plain for the taſte of ſome, or too refined for that of others. Some are for having the addreſs only to their reaſon and underſtanding; others only to their affections and paſſions; and others to their experience and conſciences: and every hearer or reader is apt to judge according to his particular taſte, and to eſteem him the beſt preacher or writer who pleaſes him moſt; without examining firſt his own particular taſte, by which he judgeth.

It is natural indeed for every one to deſire to have his own taſte pleaſed; but it is unreaſonable in him to ſet it up as the beſt, and make it a teſt and ſtandard to others: but much more unreaſonable to expect that he who ſpeaks in public ſhould always ſpeak to his taſte; which might as reaſonably be expected by another of a different one. It is equally impoſſible that what is delivered to a multitude of hearers ſhould alike ſuit all their taſtes, as that a ſingle diſh, though prepared with ever ſo much art and exactneſs, ſhould equally pleaſe a great variety of appetites; among which there may be ſome, perhaps, very nice and ſickly.

It is the preacher's duty to adapt his ſubjects

to

to the taſte of his hearers, as far as fidelity and conſcience will admit; becauſe it is well known, from reaſon and experience, as well as from the advice and practice of the apoſtle Paul *(b)*, that this is the beſt way to promote their edification. But if their taſte be totally vitiated, and incline them to take in that which will do them more harm than good, and to reliſh poiſon more than food, the moſt charitable thing the preacher can do in that caſe is, to endeavour to correct ſo vicious an appetite, which loathes that which is moſt wholeſome, and craves pernicious food; this, I ſay, it is his duty to attempt in the moſt gentle and prudent manner he can, though he run the riſk of having his judgment or orthodoxy called into queſtion by them, as it very poſſibly may; for commonly they are the moſt arbitrary and unmerciful judges in this caſe, who are leaſt of all qualified for that office.

There is not perhaps a more unaccountable weakneſs in human nature than this, that with regard to religious matters our animoſities are generally greateſt where our differences are leaſt; they who come pretty near to our ſtandard, but ſtop ſhort there, are more the objects of our diſguſt and cenſure than they who continue at the

(b) Rom. xv. 2. *Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification.* 1 Cor. ix. 22. *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means ſave ſome.*

greateſt

greateſt diſtance from it. And in ſome caſes it requires much candour and ſelf-command to get over this weakneſs. To whatever ſecret ſpring in the human mind it may be owing, I ſhall not ſtay to enquire; but the thing itſelf is too obvious not to be taken notice of.

Now we ſhould all of us be careful to find out, and examine our proper taſte of religious things; that if it be a falſe one, we may rectify it; if a bad one, mend it; if a right and good one, ſtrengthen and improve it: for the mind is capable of a falſe guſt, as well as the palate; and comes by it the ſame way; viz. by being long uſed to unnatural reliſhes, which, by cuſtom, become grateful. And having found out what it is, and examined it by the teſt of ſcripture, reaſon, and conſcience, if it be not very wrong, let us indulge it, and read thoſe books that are moſt ſuited to it, which for that reaſon will be moſt edifying. But at the ſame time, let us take care of two things: (1.) That it do not bias our judgment, and draw us into error. (2.) That it do not cramp our charity, and lead us to cenſoriouſneſs.

CHAP. XVII.

Of our great and governing Views in Life.

XVI. ANOTHER part of ſelf-knowledge is, to know what are the great ends for which we live.

We

We muſt conſider what is the ultimate ſcope we drive at; the general maxims and principles we live by; or whether we have not yet determined our end, and are governed by no fixed principles; or by ſuch as we are aſhamed to own.

'The firſt and leading dictate of prudence is, 'that a man propoſe to himſelf his true and beſt 'intereſt for his end; and the next is, that he 'make uſe of all thoſe means and opportunities 'whereby that end is to be obtained. This is 'the moſt effectual way that I know of to ſecure 'to one's ſelf the character of a wiſe man here, 'and the reward of one hereafter. And between 'theſe two there is ſuch a cloſe connection, that 'he who does not do the latter cannot be ſuppoſed 'to intend the former. He that is not careful 'of his actions, ſhall never perſuade me that he 'ſeriouſly propoſes to himſelf his beſt intereſt 'as his end; for if he did, he would as ſeriouſly 'apply himſelf to the regulation of the other, as 'the means' *(c)*.

There are few that live ſo much at random as not to have ſome main end in eye; ſomething that influences their conduct, and is the great object of their purſuit and hope. A man cannot live without ſome leading views; a wiſe man will always know what they are, whether it is fit he ſhould be led by them or no; whether they be

(c) Norris's Miſc. p. 18

ſuch

such as his understanding and reason approve, or only such as fancy and inclination suggest. He will be as much concerned to act with reason as to talk with reason; as much ashamed of a solecism and contradiction in his character as in his conversation.

Where do our views centre? in this world we are in; or that we are going to? If our hopes and joys centre here, it is a mortifying thought, that we are every day departing from our happiness; but if they are fixed above, it is a joy to think that we are every day drawing nearer to the object of our highest wishes.

Is our main care to appear great in the eye of man, or good in the eye of God? If the former, we expose ourselves to the pain of a perpetual disappointment. For it is much if the envy of men do not rob us of a good deal of our just praise, or if our vanity will be content with that portion of it they allow us. But if the latter be our main care, if our chief view is to be approved of God, we are laying up a fund of the most lasting and solid satisfactions. Not to say that this is the truest way to appear great in the eye of men, and to conciliate the esteem of all those whose praise is worth our wish.

"Be this then, O my soul, thy wise and steady "pursuit; let this circumscribe and direct thy "views; be this a law to thee, from which, ac-

"count

" count it a ſin to depart, whatever diſreſpect or
" contempt it may expoſe thee to from others *(d)*;
" be this the character thou reſolveſt to live up
" to, and at all times to maintain both in pub-
" lic and private *(e)*, viz. a friend and lover of
" God; in whoſe favour thou centreſt all thy
" preſent and future hopes. Carry this view
" with thee through life, and dare not in any
" inſtance to act inconſiſtently with it."

CHAP. XVIII.

How to know the true State of our Souls; and whether we are fit to die.

LASTLY, the moſt important point of ſelf-knowledge, after all, is to know the true ſtate of our ſouls towards God; and in what conditionwe are to die.

Theſe two things are inſeparably connected in their nature, and therefore I put them together. The knowledge of the former will determine the latter, and is the only thing that can determine it; for no man can tell whether he is fit for death, till he is acquainted with the true ſtate of his own ſoul.

(*d*) Οσα προδιωρθωται, τελοις ως νομοις, και ως ασεβησων αν παραβης τι τελων εμμενε. Οτι δ' αν ερη τις περι σε μη προσεχε. *Epict. Ench. cap.* 74.—What you have once wiſely propoſed, ſtick to, as a law not to be violated without guilt; and mind not what others ſay of you.

(*e*) Ταξον τινα ηδη χαρακτηρα σεαυτῳ, και τυπον, ον φυλαξης επι τε σεαυτῳ, και ανθρωποις ενευχαιων. *Idem. cap.* 40.—Fix your character, and keep to it, whether alone or in company.

This

This now is a matter of ſuch vaſt moment, that it is amazing any conſiderate man, or any one who thinks what it is to die, can be ſatisfied, ſo long as it remains an uncertainty.—Let us trace out this important point then with all poſſible plainneſs; and ſee if we cannot come to ſome ſatisfaction in it upon the moſt ſolid principles.

In order to know then whether we are fit to die, we muſt firſt know what it is that fits us for death.—And the anſwer to this is very natural and eaſy; viz. that only fits us for death which fits us for happineſs after death.

This is certain.—But the queſtion returns. What is it that fits us for happineſs after death?

Now, in anſwer to this, there is a previous queſtion neceſſary to be determined; viz. what that happineſs is?

It is not a fool's paradiſe, or a Turkiſh dream of ſenſitive gratifications. It muſt be a happineſs ſuited to the nature of the ſoul, and what it is capable of enjoying in a ſtate of ſeparation from the body. And what can that be, but the enjoyment of God, the beſt of beings, and the Author of ours?

The queſtion then comes to this, What is that which fits us for the enjoyment of God, in the future ſtate of ſeparate ſpirits?

And methinks we may bring this matter to a very ſure and ſhort iſſue; by ſaying, it is that which

makes

makes us like to him now.—This only is our proper qualification for the enjoyment of him after death, and therefore our only proper preparation for death. For how can they, who are unlike to God here, expect to enjoy him hereafter? and if they have no juſt ground to hope that they ſhall enjoy God in the other world, how are they fit to die?—

So that the great queſtion, Am I fit to die? reſolves itſelf into this, Am I like to God? for it is this only that fits me for heaven; and that which fits me for heaven is the only thing that fits me for death.

Let this point then be well ſearched into, and examined very deliberately and impartially.

Moſt certain it is, that God can take no real complacency in any but thoſe that are like him; and it is as certain, that none but thoſe that are like him can take pleaſure in him.—But God is a moſt pure and holy being; a being of infinite love, mercy, and patience; whoſe righteouſneſs is invariable, whoſe veracity is inviolable, and whoſe wiſdom, unerring. Theſe are the moral attributes of the divine being, in which he requires us to imitate him; the expreſs lineaments of the divine nature, in which all good men bear a reſemblance to him; and for the ſake of which only they are the objects of his delight: for God can love none but thoſe that bear this impreſs

impreſs of his own image on their ſouls.—Do we find then theſe viſible traces of the divine image there? Can we make out our likeneſs to him in his holineſs, goodneſs, mercy, righteouſneſs, truth, and wiſdom? If ſo, it is certain we are capable of enjoying him, and are the proper objects of his love.—By this we know we are fit to die; becauſe by this we know we are fit for happineſs after death.

Thus then, if we are faithful to our conſciences, and impartial in the examination of our lives and tempers, we may ſoon come to a right determination of this important queſtion, What is the true ſtate of our ſouls towards God? and in what condition we are to die*? which, as it is the moſt important, ſo it is the laſt inſtance of ſelf-knowledge I ſhall mention: and with it cloſe the firſt part of this ſubject.

* "Nor do I apprehend the knowledge of our ſtate (call "it aſſurance if you pleaſe) ſo uncommon and extraordinary "a thing as ſome are apt to imagine. Underſtand by aſſu"rance a ſatisfactory evidence of the thing, ſuch as excludes "all reaſonable doubts and diſquieting fears of the contrary, "tho', it may be, not all tranſient ſuſpicions and jealouſies. "And ſuch an aſſurance and certainty multitudes have attain"ed, and enjoy the comfort of; and indeed it is of ſo high "importance, that it is a wonder any thoughtful chriſtian that "believes an eternity, can be eaſy one week or day without "it." *Bennet's Chriſt. Orat. pag.* 569.

A TREA-

A TREATISE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

PART SECOND.

Shewing the great Excellency and Advantages of this Kind of Science.

HAVING in the former part of the ſubject laid open ſome of the main branches of ſelf-knowledge, or pointed out the principal things which a man ought to be acquainted with, relating to himſelf, I am now (reader) to lay before you the excellency and uſefulneſs of this kind of knowledge (as an inducement to labour after it) by a detail of the ſeveral great advantages attending it; which ſhall be recounted in the following chapters.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Self-Knowledge the Spring of Self-Poſſeſſion.

I. ONE great advantage of ſelf-knowledge is, that it gives a man the trueſt and moſt conſtant ſelf-poſſeſſion.

A man that is endowed with this excellent knowledge is calm and eaſy,

(1.) Under affronts and defamation; for he thinks thus: 'I am ſure I know myſelf better 'than any man can pretend to know me. This 'calumniator hath, indeed, at this time miſſed 'his mark, and ſhot his arrows at random; and 'it is my comfort that my conſcience acquits 'me of his angry imputation. However, there 'are worſe crimes which he might more juſtly 'accuſe me of; which, though hid from him, are 'known to myſelf. Let me ſet about reforming 'them; leſt, if they come to his notice, he ſhould 'attack me in a more defenceleſs part, find ſome-'thing to faſten his obloquy, and fix a laſting 'reproach upon my character' *(f)*.

There is a great deal of truth and good ſenſe in that common ſaying and doctrine of the

(f) Εαν τις σοι απαγγειλη, ὁτι ὁ δεινα σε κακως λεγει, μη απολογου προς τα λεχθεντα· αλλ' αποκρινου, ὁτι ηγνοει γαρ τα αλλα προσοντα μοι κακα, επει και αν ταυτα μονα ελεγεν. Epict. Ench. cap. 48.—*If you are told that another reviles you, do not go about to vindicate yourſelf, but reply thus: My other faults I find are hid from him, elſe I ſhould have heard of them too.*

Stoics, though they might carry it too far, That it is not things but thoughts that disturb and hurt us *(g)*. Now as self-acquaintance teaches a man the right government of the thoughts (as is shewn above, Part I. Chap. XIV.) it will help him to expel all anxious, tormenting, and fruitless thoughts, and retain the most quieting and useful ones; and so keep all easy within. Let a man but try the experiment, and he will find, that a little resolution will make the greatest part of the difficulty vanish.

(2). Self-knowledge will be a good ballast to the mind under any accidental hurry or disorder of the passions. It curbs their impetuosity; puts the reins into the hands of reason; quells the rising storm ere it make shipwreck of the con-

(g) Ταρασσει τυς ανθρωπυς, υ τα πραγματα, αλλα τα περι των πραγματων δογματα. Id. cap. 10. *It is not things, but mens opinions of things that disturb them.*

Μεμνησο ὁτι ουκ ο λοιδορων η τυπτων υβριζει, αλλα το δογμα τ περι τυτων ως υβριζοντων. Id. cap. 27.—*Remember, it is not he that reviles or assaults you that injures you, but your thinking that they have injured you.*—Σε γαρ αλλος ου βλαψει, αν μη συ θελης· τότε δε εση βεβλαμμενος, ὁταν υπολαβης βλαπτεσθαι. Id. pag. 37.—*No man can hurt you, unless you please to let him; then only are you hurt when you think yourself so.*

Τα πραγματα ουκ απτεται της ψυχης, αλλ εξω εστηκεν ακινητα· αι δε οχλησεις, εκ μονης της ενδον υπολημψεως. Marc. Anton. Med. lib. 4. sec. 3. *Things do not touch the mind, but stand quietly without; the vexation comes from within, from our suspicions only.*—*Again,* Τα πραγματα αὐτα καθ' εαυτα ψυχης απτεται· ουδε εχει εισοδον προς ψυχην· ουδε τρεψαι ουδε κινησαι ψυχην δυναται· τρεπει δε και κινει αὐτη εαυτην μονη. Id. lib. 5. sec. 19.—*Things themselves cannot affect the mind; for they have no entrance into it, to turn and move it: it is the mind alone that turns and moves itself.*

science;

ſcience; and teaches a man to *leave off contention before it be meddled with* *, it being much ſafer to keep the lion chained, than to encounter it in its full ſtrength and fury. And thus will a wiſe man, for his own peace, deal with the paſſions of others, as well as his own.

Self-knowledge, as it acquaints a man with his weakneſſes and worſt qualities, will be his guard againſt them; and a happy counterbalance to the faults and exceſſes of his natural temper.

(3.) It will keep the mind ſedate and calm under the ſurprize of bad news, or afflicting providences.

'For am I not a creature of God? and my 'life and comforts, are they not wholly at his 'diſpoſe, from whom I have received them; and 'by whoſe favour I have ſo long enjoyed them; 'and by whoſe mercy and goodneſs I have ſtill 'ſo many left?

'A heathen can teach me, under ſuch loſſes 'of friends, or eſtate, or any comfort, to direct 'my eyes to the hand of God, by whom it was 'lent me, and is now recalled; that I ought not 'to ſay it is loſt, but reſtored. And tho' I be 'injuriouſly deprived of it, ſtill the hand of God 'is to be acknowledged; for what is it to me, by 'what means He (who gave me that bleſſing) takes 'it from me again' *(b)*?

* *Prov.* xvii. 14. *(b)* Epictet. Enchirid. cap. 15.

He that rightly knows himſelf will live every day dependent on the divine Author of his mercies, for the continuance and enjoyment of them; and will learn from a higher authority than that of a heathen moraliſt, that he hath nothing he can properly call his own, or ought to depend upon as ſuch: that he is but a ſteward employed to diſpenſe the good things he poſſeſſes, according to the direction of his lord, at whoſe pleaſure he holds them; and to whom he ſhould be ready at any time cheerfully to reſign them, *Luke* xvi. 1.

(4.) Self-knowledge will help a man to preſerve an equanimity and ſelf-poſſeſſion under all the various ſcenes of adverſity and proſperity.

Both have their temptations: to ſome the temptations of proſperity are the greateſt; to others, thoſe of adverſity. Self-knowledge ſhews a man which of theſe are greateſt to him: and, at the apprehenſion of them, teaches him to arm himſelf accordingly; that nothing may deprive him of his conſtancy and ſelf-poſſeſſion, or lead him to act unbecoming the man or the chriſtian.

We commonly ſay, No one knows what he can bear till he is tried. And many perſons verify the obſervation, by bearing evils much better than they feared. Nay, the apprehenſion of an approaching evil often gives a man a greater pain than the evil itſelf. This is owing to inexperience and ſelf-ignorance.

A man

A man that knows himſelf, his own ſtrength and weakneſs, is not ſo ſubject as others to the melancholy preſages of the imagination; and whenever they intrude, he makes no other uſe of them than to take the warning, collect himſelf, and prepare for the coming evil; leaving the degree, duration, and the iſſue of it with Him who is the Sovereign Diſpoſer of all events, in a quiet dependence on his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs.

Such ſelf-poſſeſſion is one great effect and advantage of ſelf-knowledge.

CHAP. II.

Self-Knowledge leads to a wiſe and ſteady Conduct.

II. AS ſelf-knowledge will keep a man calm and equal in his temper, ſo it will make him wiſe and cautious in his conduct.

A precipitant and raſh conduct is ever the effect of a confuſed and irregular hurry of thought: ſo that when, by the influence of ſelf-knowledge, the thoughts become cool, ſedate, and rational, the conduct will be ſo too. It will give a man that even, ſteady, uniform behaviour in the management of his affairs, that is ſo neceſſary for the diſpatch of buſineſs; and prevent many diſappointments and troubles which ariſe from the unſucceſsful execution of immature or ill-judged projects.

In ſhort, moſt of the troubles which men meet with in the world may be traced up to this ſource, and reſolved into ſelf-ignorance. We may complain of Providence, and complain of men; but the fault, if we examine it, will commonly be found to be our own. Our imprudence, which ariſes from ſelf-ignorance, either brings our troubles upon us, or increaſes them. Want of temper and conduct will make any affliction double.

What a long train of difficulties do ſometimes proceed from one wrong ſtep in our conduct, into which ſelf-ignorance or inconſideration betrayed us! And every evil that befals us in conſequence of that, we are to charge upon ourſelves.

CHAP. III.

Humility the Effect of Self-Knowledge.

III. TRUE ſelf-knowledge always produces humility.

Pride is ever the offspring of ſelf-ignorance. The reaſon men are vain and ſelf-ſufficient is, becauſe they do not know their own failings; and the reaſon they are not better acquainted with them is, becauſe they hate ſelf-inſpection. Let a man but turn his eyes within, ſcrutinize himſelf, and ſtudy his own heart, and he will ſoon ſee enough to make him humble. *Behold, I am vile,*

*vile**, is the language only of ſelf-knowledge (*i*).

Whence is it that young people are generally ſo vain, ſelf-ſufficient, and aſſured? but becauſe they have taken no time or pains to cultivate a ſelf-acquaintance. And why does pride and ſtiffneſs appear ſo often in advanced age, but becauſe men grow old in ſelf-ignorance? A moderate degree of ſelf-knowledge would cure an inordinate degree of ſelf-complacency (*k*).

Humility is not more neceſſary to ſalvation than ſelf-knowledge is to humility (*l*).

It would effectually prevent that bad diſpoſition which is too apt to ſteal upon and infect ſome of the beſt human minds (eſpecially thoſe who aim at ſingular and exalted degrees of piety) viz. a religious vanity or ſpiritual pride: which, without a good deal of ſelf-knowledge and ſelf-attention, will gradually inſinuate into the heart, taint the mind, and ſophiſticate our virtues before we are aware; and, in proportion to its prevalence,

* *Job* xi. 4.

(*i*) Qui bene ſeipſum cognoſcit ſibi ipſi vileſcit, nec laudibus dilectatur humanis. *Tho. a Kemp. de Imit. Chr. lib.* 1. *cap.* 2.

(*k*) Quanto quis minus ſe videt, tanto minus ſe diſplicet. *Greg.*

(*l*) Scio neminem abſque ſui cognitione ſalvari, de quâ nimirum mater ſalutis, humilitas oritur, et timor Domini. *Bernard.*—Utraque cognitio Dei, ſcilicet et tui, tibi neceſſaria eſt ad ſalutem; quia ſicut ex notitiâ tui venit in te timor Dei, atque ex Dei notitiâ itidem amor; ſic è contra, ex ignorantia tui, ſuperbia, ac de Dei ignorantia venit deſperatio. *Idem in Cantic.*

make the chriſtian temper degenerate into the Phariſaical.

'Might I be allowed to chuſe my own lot, 'I ſhould think it much more eligible to want 'my ſpiritual comforts, than to abound in 'theſe at the expence of my humility. No; 'let a penitent and a contrite ſpirit be always 'my portion; and may I ever ſo be the favou-'rite of Heaven, as never to forget that I am 'chief of ſinners. Knowledge in the ſublime 'and glorious myſteries of the chriſtian faith, 'and raviſhing contemplations of God and a 'future ſtate, are moſt deſirable advantages; 'but ſtill I prefer charity, which edifieth before 'the higheſt intellectual perfections of that know-'ledge which puffeth up*.—Thoſe ſpiritual ad-'vantages are certainly beſt for us, which increaſe 'our modeſty and awaken our caution, and diſ-'poſe us to ſuſpect and deny ourſelves.—The 'higheſt in God's eſteem are meaneſt in their 'own:—and their excellency conſiſts in the 'meekneſs and truth, not in the pomp and oſ-'tentation of piety, which affects to be ſeen and 'admired of men' (*m*).

CHAP.

* 1 *Cor.* viii. 1.

(*m*) Stanhope's Tho. à Kemp. B. 2. ch. 11.

[Chriſt.] 'My Son, when thou feeleſt thy ſoul warmed 'with devotion and holy zeal for my ſervice, it will be ad-'viſeable to decline all thoſe methods of publiſhing it to the 'world, which vain men are ſo induſtrious to take; and con-

tent

CHAP. IV.

Charity another Effect of Self-Knowledge.

IV. SELF-Knowledge greatly promotes a ſpirit of meekneſs and charity.

The more a man is acquainted with his own failings, the more is he diſpoſed to make allowances for thoſe of others. The knowledge he hath of himſelf will incline him to be as ſevere in his animadverſions on his own conduct as

'tent thyſelf with its being known to God and thine own conſcience. Rather endeavour to moderate and ſuppreſs thoſe 'pompous expreſſions of it, in which ſome place the very perfection of zeal. Think meanly of thy own virtues.—Some 'men, of a bold ungoverned zeal, aſpire at things beyond their 'ſtrength, and expreſs more vehemence than conduct in their 'actions. They are perfectly carried out of themſelves with 'eagerneſs; forget that they are ſtill poor inſects upon earth, 'and think of nothing leſs than building their neſts in heaven. 'Now theſe are often left to themſelves, and taught by ſad experience, that the faint flutterings of men are weak and ineffectual; and that none ſoars to heaven except I aſſiſt his 'flight, and mount him on my own wings. Virtue does not 'conſiſt in abundance of illumination and knowledge; but in 'lowlineſs of mind, in meekneſs, and charity; in a mind entirely reſigned to God, and ſincerely diſpoſed to ſerve and 'pleaſe him; in a juſt ſenſe of every man's vileneſs; and not 'only thinking very meanly of one's ſelf, but being well content to be ſo thought of by others. *Id. Book* 3. *Chap.* 8.

'It is a dangerous drunkenneſs, I confeſs, that of wine; 'but there is another more dangerous. How many ſouls do 'I ſee in the world drunk with vanity, and a high opinion of 'themſelves! This drunkenneſs cauſes them to make a thouſand falſe ſteps, and a thouſand ſtumbles. Their ways are 'all oblique and crooked. Like men in drink, they have always a great opinion of their own wiſdom, their power, and 'their prudence; all which often fail them.——Examine

as he is on that of others; and as candid to their faults as he is to his own *.

There is an uncommon beauty, force, and propriety in that caution which our Saviour gives us: *And why beholdeſt thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but conſidereſt not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou ſay to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, firſt caſt the beam out of thine own eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to caſt out the mote out of thy brother's eye* †. In which words theſe four things are plainly intimated; (1.) That ſome are much more quick-ſighted to diſcern the faults and blemiſhes of others than their own: can ſpy a mote in another's eye ſooner than a beam in their own. (2.) That they are often the moſt for-

'well thyſelf, my ſoul; ſee if thou art not tainted with this 'evil. Alas! if thou denieſt it, thou proveſt it. It is great 'pride to think one has no pride; for it is to think you are 'as good indeed as you eſteem yourſelf. But there is no 'man in the world but eſteems himſelf better than he truly 'is.

'Thou wilt ſay, it may be, thou haſt a very ill opinion of 'thyſelf. But be aſſured, my ſoul, thou doſt not deſpiſe thy-'ſelf ſo much as thou art truly deſpicable. If thou doſt deſ-'piſe thyſelf indeed, thou makeſt a merit of that very thing; 'ſo that pride is attached to this very contempt of thyſelf.' *Jurieu's Method of Devot. pag.* 8. *ch.* 10.

* 'The great God ſeems to have given that commandment '(KNOW THYSELF) to thoſe men more eſpecially, who are 'apt to make remarks on other mens actions, and forget 'themſelves.' *Plutarch's Mor. Vol.* i. *pag.* 273.

† *Mat.* vii. 3—5.

ward

ward to correct and cure the foibles of others, who are moſt unqualified for that office. The beam in their own eye makes them altogether unfit to pull out the mote from their brother's. A man half blind himſelf ſhould never ſet up for an oculiſt. (3.) That they who are inclined to deal in cenſure ſhould always begin at home. (4.) Great cenſoriouſneſs is great hypocriſy. *Thou hypocrite*, &c. all this is nothing but the effect of woful ſelf-ignorance.

This common failing of the human nature the heathens were very ſenſible of (*n*); and imag'd it in the following manner:—every man (ſay they) carries a wallet, or two bags, with him; the one hanging before him, and the other behind him; into that *before*, he puts the faults of others; into that *behind*, his own; by which means he never ſees his own failings, whilſt he has thoſe of others always before his eyes (*o*).

But ſelf-knowledge now helps us to turn this

(*n*) —Egomet mî ignoſco Mænius inquit;
Stultus et improbus hic amor eſt, dignuſque notari.
Cum tua pervideas oculis male Lippus inunctis,
Cur in amicorum vitiis tam cernis acutum
Quâm aut aquila, aut ſerpens *Epidaurius?*
Hor. Sat. 3. *lib.* 1.

Fit enim, neſcio quomodo, ut magis in aliis cernamus quam in nobiſmet ipſis, ſiquid delinquitur. *Cicero.*

(*o*) Sed præcedenti ſpectatur mantica tergo. *Per. Sat.* 4.
Non videmus id manticæ quod in tergo eſt. *Catul. Carm.* 22.
Noſtram peram non videntes, aliorum (juxta Perſium) manticam conſideramus. *D. Hieron. Epiſt.* 91.

wallet, and place that which hath our own faults before our eyes, and that which hath in it thoſe of others, behind our back. A very neceſſary regulation this, if we would behold our own faults in the ſame light in which they do. For we muſt not expect that others will be as blind to our foibles as we ourſelves are: they will carry them before their eyes, whether we do or no. And to imagine that the world takes no notice of them, becauſe we do not, is juſt as wiſe as to fancy that others do not ſee us, becauſe we ſhut our eyes.

CHAP. V.

Moderation the Effect of Self-Knowledge.

V. ANOTHER genuine offspring of ſelf-knowledge is moderation.

This indeed can hardly be conceived to be ſeparate from that of meekneſs and charity, before-mentioned; but I chooſe to give it a diſtinct mention, becauſe I conſider it under a different view and operation, viz. as that which guards and influences our ſpirits in all matters of debate and controverſy.

Moderation is a great and important chriſtian virtue, very different from that bad quality of the mind under which it is often miſrepreſented and diſguiſed, viz. lukewarmneſs and indifference about the truth. The former is very conſiſt-

ent

ent with a regular and well-corrected zeal; the latter consists in the total want of it: the former is sensible of, and endeavours with peace and prudence to maintain the dignity and importance of divine doctrines; the latter hath no manner of concern about them: the one feels the secret-influences of them; the other is quite a stranger to their power and efficacy: the one laments in secret the sad decay of vital religion; the other is an instance of it. In short, the one proceeds from true knowledge; the other from great ignorance: the one is a good mark of sincerity, and the other a certain sign of hypocrisy. And to confound two things together, which are so essentially different, can be the effect of nothing but great ignorance, inconsideration, or an over-heated injudicious zeal.

A self-knowing man can easily distinguish between these two. And the knowledge which he has of human nature in general, from a thorough contemplation of his own in particular, shews him the necessity of preserving a medium (as in every thing else, so especially) between the two extremes of a bigotted zeal on the one hand, and indolent lukewarmness on the other. As he will not look upon every thing to be worth contending for, so he will look upon nothing worth losing his temper for in the contention. Because, though the truth be of ever so great importance, nothing

can

can do a greater diſſervice to it, or make a man more incapable of defending it, than intemperate heat and paſſion; whereby he injures and betrays the cauſe he is over-anxious to maintain. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God**.

Self-knowledge heals our animoſities, and greatly cools our debates about matters of dark and doubtful ſpeculation. One who knows himſelf ſets too great a value upon his time and temper, to plunge raſhly into thoſe vain and fruitleſs controverſies, in which one of them is ſure to be loſt, and the other in great danger of being ſo; eſpecially when a man of bad temper and bad principles is the opponent; who aims rather to ſilence his adverſary with over-bearing confidence, dark unmeaning language, authoritative airs, and hard words, than convince him with ſolid argument; and who plainly contends not for truth but victory. Little good can be done to the beſt cauſe in ſuch a circumſtance: and a wiſe and moderate man, who knows human nature, and knows himſelf, will rather give his antagoniſt the pleaſure of an imaginary triumph, than engage in ſo unequal a combat.

An eagerneſs and zeal for diſpute, on every ſubject, and with every one, ſhews great ſelf-ſufficiency; that never-failing ſign of great ſelf-ignorance: and true moderation, which creates

* *James* i. 20.

an

an indifference to little things, and a wiſe and well-proportioned zeal for things of importance, can proceed from nothing but true knowledge, which has its foundation in ſelf-acquaintance.

CHAP. VI.

Self-Knowledge improves the Judgment.

VI. ANOTHER great advantage of being well acquainted with ourſelves is, that it helps us to form a better judgment of other things.

Self-knowledge indeed does not enlarge or increaſe our natural capacities, but it guides and regulates them; leads us to the right uſe and application of them; and removes a great many things which obſtruct their due exerciſe; as pride, prejudice, and paſſion, &c. which oftentimes ſo miſerably pervert the rational powers.

He that hath taken a juſt meaſure of himſelf, is thereby better able to judge of other things.

(1.) He knows how to judge of men and human nature better;—for human nature, ſetting aſide the difference of natural genius, and the improvements of education and religion, is pretty much the ſame in all. There are the ſame paſſions and appetites, the ſame natural infirmities and inclinations in all mankind; tho' ſome are more predominant and diſtinguiſhable in ſome than they are in others. So that, if a

man

man be but well acquainted with his own, this, together with a very little obſervation on human life, will ſoon diſcover to him thoſe of other men; and ſhew him very impartially their particular failings and excellencies, and help him to form a much truer ſentiment of them than if he were to judge only by their exterior, the appearance they make in the eye of the world, or the character given of them by others; both which are often very fallacious.

(2.) Self-knowledge will teach us to judge rightly of facts as well as men. It will exhibit things to the mind in a proper light, and true colours, without thoſe falſe gloſſes and appearances which fancy throws upon them, or in which the imagination often paints them. It will teach us to judge not with the imagination, but with the underſtanding; and will ſet a guard upon the former, which ſo often repreſents things in wrong views, and gives the mind falſe impreſſions. See *Part* I. *Chap.* IV.

(3.) It helps us to eſtimate the true value of all worldly good things. It rectifies our notions of them, and leſſens that enormous eſteem we are apt to have for them. For when a man knows himſelf, and his true intereſts, he will ſee how far, and in what degree, theſe things are ſuitable to him, and ſubſervient to his good; and how far they are unſuitable, inſnaring, and pernicious.

nicious. This, and not the common opinion of the world, will be his rule of judgment concerning them. By this he will ſee quite through them; ſee what they really are at bottom; and how far a wiſe man ought to deſire them. The reaſon why men value them ſo extravagantly is, becauſe they take but a ſuperficial view of them, and only look upon their out-ſide, where they are moſt ſhowy and inviting. Were they to look within them, conſider their intrinſic worth, their ordinary effects, their tendency and their end, they would not be ſo apt to over-value them. And a man that has learned to ſee through himſelf, can eaſily ſee through theſe *(p)*.

CHAP. VII.

Self-Knowledge directs to the proper Exerciſe of Self-Denial.

VII. A MAN that knows himſelf beſt, knows how, and wherein, he ought to deny himſelf. The

(p) Abſtrahunt a recto divitiæ, honores, potentia, et cetera quæ opinione noſtra chara ſunt, precio ſuo vilia. Neſcimus æſtimare res; de quibus, non cum fama ſed cum rerum natura, deliberandum eſt. Nihil habent iſta magnificum, quo mentes in ſe noſtras trahant, præter hoc quod mirari illa conſuevimus. Non, enim quia concupiſcenda ſunt, laudantur, ſed concupiſcuntur quia laudata ſunt. *Sen. Epiſt.* 82.—Riches, honours, power, and the like, which owe all their worth to our falſe opinion of them, are too apt to draw the heart from virtue. We know not how to prize them; they are not to be judged of by the common vogue, but by their own nature.

They

The great duty of ſelf-denial, which our Saviour ſo expreſsly requires of all his followers, (plain and neceſſary as it is) has been much miſtaken and abuſed; and that not only by the church of Rome, in their doctrines of penance, faſts, and pilgrimages, but by ſome proteſtant chriſtians, in the inſtances of voluntary abſtinence and unneceſſary auſterities: whence they are ſometimes apt to be too cenſorious againſt thoſe who indulge themſelves in the uſe of thoſe indifferent things, which they make it a point of conſcience to abſtain from. Whereas, would they confine their exerciſe of ſelf-denial to the plain and important points of chriſtian practice, devoutly performing the neceſſary duties they are moſt averſe to, and reſolutely avoiding the known ſins they are moſt inclined to, under the direction of ſcripture, they would ſoon become more ſolid, judicious, and exemplary chriſtians; and did they know themſelves, they would eaſily ſee that herein there is occaſion and ſcope enough for ſelf-denial; and that to a degree of greater ſeverity and difficulty than there is in thoſe little corporal abſtinences and mortifications they enjoin themſelves.

(1.) Self-knowledge will direct us to the ne-

They have nothing to attract our eſteem, but that we are uſed to admire them; they are not cried up becauſe they are things that ought to be deſired, but they are deſired becauſe they are generally cried up.

ceſſary

ceſſary exerciſes of ſelf-denial, with regard to the duties our tempers are moſt averſe to.

There is no one but, at ſome times, finds a great backwardneſs and indiſpoſition to ſome duties which he knows to be ſeaſonable and neceſſary. This then is a proper occaſion for ſelf-diſcipline. For to indulge this indiſpoſition is very dangerous, and leads to an habitual neglect of known duty; and to reſiſt and oppoſe it, and to prepare for a diligent and faithful diſcharge of the duty, notwithſtanding the many pleas and excuſes that carnal diſpoſition may urge for the neglect of it, this requires no ſmall pains and ſelf-denial; and yet it is very neceſſary to the peace of conſcience.

As for our encouragement to this piece of ſelf-denial, we need only remember that the difficulty of the duty, and our unfitneſs for it, will, upon the trial, be found to be much leſs than we apprehended. And the pleaſure of reflecting, that we have diſcharged our conſciences, and given a freſh teſtimony of our uprightneſs, will more than compenſate the pains and difficulty we found therein. And the oftener theſe criminal propenſions to the wilful neglect of duty are oppoſed and conquered, the ſeldomer will they return, or the weaker will they grow: till at laſt, by divine grace, they will be wholly overcome; and in the room of them will ſucceed

ceed an habitual *readineſs to every good work* *, and a very ſenſible delight therein: a much happier effect than can be expected from the ſevereſt exerciſes of ſelf-denial, in the inſtances beforementioned.

(2.) A man that knows himſelf will ſee an equal neceſſity for ſelf-denial, in order to check and controul his inclinations to ſinful actions; to ſubdue the rebel within; to reſiſt the ſolicitations of ſenſe and appetite; to ſummon all his wiſdom to avoid the occaſions and temptations to ſin, and all his ſtrength to oppoſe it.

All this (eſpecially if it be a favourite conſtitutional iniquity) will coſt a man pains and mortification enough. For inſtance, the ſubduing a violent paſſion, or taming a ſenſual inclination, or forgiving an apparent injury and affront. It is evident, ſuch a ſelf-conqueſt can never be attained without much ſelf-knowledge and ſelf-denial.

And that ſelf-denial that is exerciſed this way, as it will be a better evidence of our ſincerity, ſo it will be more helpful and ornamental to the intereſts of religion, than the greateſt zeal in thoſe particular duties which are moſt ſuitable to our natural tempers, or than the greateſt auſterities in ſome particular inſtances of mortification, which are not ſo neceſſary, and perhaps not ſo difficult or diſagreeable to us as this.

* *Tit.* iii. 1.

To

To what amazing heights of piety may ſome be thought to mount (raiſed on the wings of a flaming zeal, and diſtinguiſhed by uncommon preciſeneſs and ſeverity about little things) who all the while, perhaps, cannot govern one paſſion, and appear yet ignorant of, and ſlaves to, their darling iniquity! Through an ignorance of themſelves, they miſapply their zeal, and miſplace their ſelf-denial; and by that means blemiſh their characters with a viſible inconſiſtency *(q)*.

CHAP. VIII.

Self-Knowledge promotes our Uſefulneſs in the World.

VIII. THE more we know of ourſelves, the more uſeful we are like to be in thoſe ſtations of life in which Providence has fixed us.

When we know our proper talents and capacities, we know in what manner we are capable of being uſeful; and the conſideration of our characters and relations in life will direct us to

(*q*) A pious zeal may be active and yet not pernicious, and ſhine without burning. Intemperate zeal is like Sirius in Homer.

Δαμπρότατος μὲν ὅγ' ἐστι, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τέτυκται
Καὶ τε φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι·
Ille quidem clara, ſed ſæva luce coruſcat,
Et morbos æſtuſque adfert mortalibus ægris. *Il.* x. 30.

Pious zeal is like the gentle flame in Virgil.

Ecce levis ſubito de vertice viſus Juli
Fundere lumem apex, tractuque innoxia mollis
Lambere flamma comas, et circum tempora paſci. *Æn.* II.

Jortin's Diſc. p. 31.

the

the proper application of thoſe talents; ſhow us to what ends they were given us, and to what purpoſes they ought to be improved.

'Many of thoſe who ſet up for wits, and pre-'tend to a more than ordinary ſagacity and de-'licacy of ſenſe, do, notwithſtanding, ſpend their 'time unaccountably; and live away whole days, 'weeks, and ſometimes months together, to as 'little purpoſe (tho' it may be not ſo innocent-'ly) as if they had been aſleep all the while.— 'But if their parts be ſo good as they would have 'others believe, ſure they are worth improving; 'if not, they have the more need of it.—Great-'neſs of parts is ſo far from being a diſcharge 'from induſtry, that I find men of the moſt ex-'quiſite ſenſe in all ages were always moſt cu-'rious of their time. And therefore I very much 'ſuſpect the excellency of thoſe mens parts, who 'are diſſolute and careleſs miſ-ſpenders of it' *(r)*.

It is a ſad thing to obſerve, how miſerably ſome men debaſe and proſtitute their capacities. Thoſe gifts and indulgences of nature, by which they outſhine many others, and by which they are capable of doing real ſervice to the cauſe of virtue and religion, and of being eminently uſeful to mankind, they either entirely neglect, or ſhamefully abuſe, to the diſhonour of God, and the prejudice of their fellow-creatures, by

(r) Norris's Miſc. p. 120.

en-

encouraging and emboldening them in the ways of vice and vanity; for the falſe glare of a profane wit will ſometimes make ſuch ſtrong impreſſions on a weak, unſettled mind, as to overbear the principles of reaſon and wiſdom, and give it too favourable ſentiments of what it before abhorred: whereas the ſame force and ſprightlineſs of genius would have been very happily and uſefully employed in putting ſin out of countenance, and in rallying the follies, and expoſing the inconſiſtencies of a vicious and profligate character.

The more talents and abilities men are bleſſed with, the more pains they ought to take.—This is Chryſoſtom's obſervation. And the reaſon is obvious; becauſe they have more to anſwer for than other men; which I take to be a better reaſon than what is aſſigned by this father, viz. becauſe they have more to loſe *(s)*.

When a man once knows where his ſtrength lies, wherein he excels, or is capable of excelling, how far his influence extends, and in what ſtation of life Providence hath fixed him, and the duties of that ſtation, he then knows what talents he ought to cultivate, in what manner, and to what objects they are to be chiefly directed and applied, in order to ſhine in that ſtation,

(s) Ὥστε τοῖς σοφοῖς μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς ἀμαθεστέροις, μείζων ὁ πόνος οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπὲρ τῶν αὐτῶν ἡ ζημία, ἀμφοῖν τοῦτοις κἀκείνοις. *De Sacred. l.* v. c. 5.

and

and be uſeful in it. This will keep him even and ſteady in his purſuits and views; conſiſtent with himſelf, uniform in his conduct, and uſeful to mankind; and will prevent his ſhooting at a wrong mark, or miſſing the right one he aims at; as thouſands do, for want of this neceſſary branch of ſelf-knowledge.——*See Part. I. Chap. V.*

CHAP. IX.

Self-Knowledge leads to a Decorum and Conſiſtency of Character.

IX. A MAN that knows himſelf, knows how to act with diſcretion and dignity in every ſtation and character.

Almoſt all the ridicule we ſee in the world takes its riſe from ſelf-ignorance: and to this mankind, by common aſſent, aſcribe it, when they ſay of a perſon that acts out of character, he does not know himſelf. Affectation is the ſpring of all ridicule, and ſelf-ignorance the true ſource of affectation. A man that does not know his proper character, nor what becomes it, cannot act ſuitably to it. He will often affect a character that does not belong to him; and will either act above or beneath himſelf; which will make him equally contemptible in the eyes of them that know him *(t)*.

(t) Omnique in re poſſe quod deceat facere, artis et naturæ eſt; ſcire, quid, quandoque deceat, prudentiæ. *Cic. de Orat. l.* 3. § 55.

A man

A man of ſuperior rank and character, that knows himſelf, knows that he is but a man; ſubject to the ſame ſickneſſes, frailties, diſappointments, pains, paſſions, and ſorrows, as other men; that true honour lies in thoſe things, in which it is poſſible for the meaneſt peaſant to excel him; and therefore he will not be vainly arrogant. He knows that they are only tranſitory and accidental things that ſet him above the reſt of mankind; that he will ſoon be upon a level with them; and therefore learns to condeſcend: and there is a dignity in this condeſcenſion; it does not ſink, but exalt, his reputation and character.

A man of inferior rank, that knows himſelf, knows how to be content, quiet, and thankful, in his lower ſphere. As he has not an extravagant veneration and eſteem for thoſe external things which raiſe one man's circumſtances ſo much above another's, ſo he does not look upon himſelf as the worſe or leſs valuable man, purely becauſe he has them not; much leſs does he envy them that have them. As he has not their advantages, ſo neither has he their temptations; he is in that ſtate of life which the great Arbiter and Diſpoſer of all things hath allotted him; and he is ſatisfied: but as a deference is owing to external ſuperiority, he knows how to pay a proper reſpect to thoſe that are above him, without that abject

and ſervile cringing, which diſcovers an inordinate eſteem for their condition. As he does not over-eſteem them for thoſe little accidental advantages in which they excel him, ſo neither does he overvalue himſelf for thoſe things in which he excels others.

Were hearers to know themſelves, they would not take upon them to dictate to their preachers, or teach their miniſters how to teach them (which, as St. Auſtin obſerves, *(u)* is the ſame thing as if a patient, when he ſends for a phyſician, ſhould preſcribe to him what he would have him preſcribe); but, if they happen to hear ſomething not quite agreeable to their former ſentiments, would betake themſelves more diligently to the ſtudy of their Bibles, to know whether thoſe things were ſo *.

And were miniſters to know themſelves, they would know the nature and duty of their office, and the wants and infirmities of their hearers better, than to domineer over their faith, or ſhoot over their heads, and ſeek their own popularity, rather than their benefit. They would be more ſolicitous for their edification, than their approbation (the moſt palatable food is not always the moſt wholeſome); and, like a faithful phy-

(u) Norit medicus quid ſalutiferum, quidve contrarium petat ægrotos. Ægroti eſtis, nolite ergo dictare quæ vobis medicamina velit opponere.

* *Acts* xvii. 11

ſician,

ſician, would earneſtly intend and endeavour their good, though it be in a way they may not like; and rather riſk their own characters with weak and captious men, than with-hold any thing that is needful for them, or be unfaithful to God and their own conſciences. Patients muſt not expect to be always pleaſed, nor phyſicians to be always applauded.

CHAP. X.

Piety the Effect of Self-Knowledge.

X. SELF-Knowledge tends greatly to cultivate a ſpirit of true piety.

Ignorance is ſo far from being the mother of devotion, that nothing is more deſtructive of it: and, of all ignorance, none is a greater bane to it than ſelf-ignorance. This indeed is very conſiſtent with ſuperſtition, bigotry, and enthuſiaſm, thoſe common counterfeits of piety, which by weak and credulous minds are often miſtaken for it. But true piety and real devotion can only ſpring from a juſt knowledge of God and ourſelves; and the relation we ſtand in to him, and the dependence we have upon him. For when we conſider ourſelves as the creatures of God, whom he made for his honour, and as creatures incapable of any happineſs but what reſults from his favour; and as intirely and continually dependent upon him for every thing we have and

hope for; and whilſt we bear this thought in our minds, what can induce or prompt us more to love, and fear, and truſt him as our God, our Father, and all-ſufficient Friend and Helper?

CHAP. XI.

Self-Knowledge teaches us rightly to perform the Duties of Religion.

XI. SELF-Knowledge will be a good help and direction to us in many of our devout and chriſtian exerciſes; particularly,

(1.) In the duty of prayer; both as to the matter and mode *(w)*.—He that rightly knows himſelf, will be very ſenſible of his ſpiritual wants; and he that is well acquainted with his ſpiritual wants, will not be at a loſs what to pray for. "Our hearts would be the beſt prayer-"books, if we were well ſkilful in reading them. "Why do men pray, and call for prayers when "they come to die, but that they begin a little "better to know themſelves? and were they "now but to hear the voice of God and con-"ſcience, they would not remain ſpeechleſs. "But they that are born deaf are always dumb" *(x)*.

Again, ſelf-knowledge will teach us to pray, not only with fluency, but fervency; will help us to keep the heart, as well as order our ſpeech,

(w) Ille Deo veram orationem exhibet qui ſemitipſum cognoſcit. *Greg.*

(x) Baxter.

before

before God; and ſo promote the grace as well as gift of prayer. Did we but ſeriouſly conſider what we are, and what we are about; whom we pray to, and what we pray for, it is impoſſible we ſhould be ſo dead, ſpiritleſs, and formal in this duty, as we too often are. The very thought would inſpire us with life, and faith, and fervour.

(2.) Self-knowledge will be very helpful to us in the duty of thankſgiving, as it ſhews us both how ſuitable and how ſeaſonable the mercies are which we receive. A chriſtian that keeps up an intelligence with himſelf, conſiders what he hath as well as what he wants; and is no leſs ſenſible of the value of his mercies than his unworthineſs of them: and this is what makes him thankful. For this reaſon it is, that one chriſtian's heart even melts with gratitude for thoſe very mercies which others diſeſteem and depreciate; and perhaps deſpiſe, becauſe they have not what they think greater. But a man that knows himſelf, knows that he deſerves nothing, and therefore is thankful for every thing; for thankfulneſs as neceſſarily flows from humility as humility does from ſelf-acquaintance.

(3.) In the duties of reading and hearing the word of God. Self-Knowledge is of excellent uſe to enable us to underſtand and apply that which we read or hear. Did we underſtand our hearts better, we ſhould underſtand the word of

God better; for that ſpeaks to the heart. A man that is acquainted with his own heart, preſently ſees how deeply the divine word penetrates and explores, ſearches and lays open its moſt inward parts: he feels what he reads; and finds that a quickening ſpirit, which to a ſelf-ignorant man is but a dead letter.

Moreover, this ſelf-acquaintance teaches a man to apply what he reads and hears of the word of God. He ſees the pertinence, congruity, and ſuitableneſs of it to his own caſe; and lays it up faithfully in the ſtore-room of his mind, to be digeſted and approved by his after-thoughts. And it is by this art of applying ſcripture, and urging the moſt ſuitable inſtructions and admonitions of it home upon our conſciences, that we receive the greateſt benefit by it.

(4.) Nothing is of more eminent ſervice in the great duty of meditation; eſpecially in that part of it which conſiſts in heart converſe. A man who is unacquainted with himſelf, is as unfit to converſe with his heart as he is with a ſtranger he never ſaw, and whoſe taſte and temper he is altogether unacquainted with. He knows not how to get his thoughts about him: and when he has, he knows not how to range and fix them; and hath no more the command of them than a General has of a wild undiſciplined army, that has never been exerciſed, or accuſtomed

ed to obedience and order. But one, who hath made it the ſtudy of his life to be acquainted with himſelf, is ſoon diſpoſed to enter into a free and familiar converſe with his own heart; and in ſuch a ſelf-conference improves more in true wiſdom, and acquires more uſeful and ſubſtantial knowledge, than he could do from the moſt polite and refined converſation in the world.—Of ſuch excellent uſe is ſelf-knowledge in all the duties of devotion and piety.

CHAP. XII.

Self-Knowledge the beſt Preparation for Death.

XII. SELF-Knowledge will be an habitual preparation for death, and a conſtant guard againſt the ſurpriſe of it, becauſe it fixes and ſettles our hopes of future happineſs. That which makes the thoughts of death ſo terrifying to the ſoul, is its utter uncertainty what will become of it after death. Were this uncertainty to be removed, a thouſand things would reconcile us to the thoughts of dying *(y)*.

(y) Illa quoque res morti nos alienat, quod hæc jam novimus, illa ad quæ tranſituri ſumus, neſcimus qualia ſint. Et horremus ignota. Naturalis prætereâ tenebrarum metus eſt, in quas adductura mors creditur. *Sen. Epiſt.* 83.—It is this makes us averſe to death, that it tranſlates us to objects we are unacquainted with; and we tremble at the thoughts of thoſe things that are unknown to us. We are naturally afraid of being in the dark; and death is a leap in the dark.

" Diſtruſt and darkneſs of a future ſtate,
" Is that which makes mankind to dread their fate:
" Dying is nothing; but 'tis this we fear,
" To be we know not what,—we know not where."

Now ſelf-knowledge, in a good degree, diſſipates this gloom, and removes this dreadful doubt; for, as the word of God hath revealed the certainty of a future ſtate of happineſs, which the good man ſhall enter upon after death, and plainly deſcribed the requiſite qualifications for it; when by a long and laborious ſelf-acquaintance, he comes diſtinctly to diſcern thoſe qualifications in himſelf, his hopes of heaven ſoon raiſe him above the fears of death: and tho' he may not be able to form any clear or diſtinct conception of the nature of that happineſs, yet in general he is aſſured that it will be a moſt exquiſite and extenſive one, and will contain in it every thing neceſſary to make it complete; becauſe it will come immediately from God himſelf *(z)*: whereas they who know not what they are,

(z) 'When we ſay that the ſtate of the other world is unknown, the only meaning of it is, that it is a ſtate of ſuch happineſs, ſo far beyond any thing we ever yet experienced, that we cannot form any notion or idea of it: we know that there is ſuch a happineſs; we know in ſome meaſure wherein this happineſs conſiſts; viz. in ſeeing God and the bleſſed Jeſus, who loved us, and gave himſelf for us; in praiſing our Creator and Redeemer; in converſing with ſaints and angels. But how great, how raviſhing and tranſporting a pleaſure this is, we cannot tell, becauſe we never yet felt it.

'—Now

are, muſt neceſſarily be ignorant what they ſhall be. A man that is all darkneſs within, can have but a dark proſpect forward *(a)*.

O, what would we not give for ſolid hope in death!—Reader, wouldſt thou have it, know God, and know thyſelf.

'—Now methinks this ſhould not make the thoughts of death 'uneaſy to us; ſhould not make us unwilling to go to heaven; 'that the happineſs of heaven is too great for us to know, or 'to conceive in this world. For men are naturally fond of 'unknown and untried pleaſures; which is ſo far from being 'a diſparagement to them, that it raiſes our expectations of 'them, that they are unknown. In the things of this world, 'enjoyment uſually leſſens our eſteem and value for them, 'and we always value that moſt which we have never tried; 'and methinks the happineſs of the other world ſhould not be 'the only thing we deſpiſe before we try it.—It is ſome en-'couragement to us that the happineſs of heaven is too big to 'be known in this world; for did we perfectly know it now, 'it could not be very great.' *Sherlock on Death*, p. 71, 72.

(a) Illi mors gravis incubat,
Qui, notis nimis omnibus,
Ignotus moritur ſibi. *Sen. Tha. Thyeſ.*

Who, expos'd to others eyes,
Into his own heart never pries,
Death's to him a ſtrange ſurpriſe.

A

TREATISE

OF

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

PART THIRD.

Shewing how Self-Knowledge is to be attained.

FROM what hath been ſaid under the two former parts of the ſubject, ſelf-knowledge appears to be in itſelf ſo excellent, and in its effects ſo extenſively uſeful and conducive to the happineſs of human kind, that nothing need further be added, by way of motive or inducement, to excite us to make it the great object of our ſtudy and purſuit. If we regard our preſent peace, ſatisfaction, and uſefulneſs, or our future and everlaſting intereſts, we ſhall certainly value and proſecute this knowledge above all others; as what will be moſt ornamental to our characters, and beneficial to our intereſt in every ſtate of life, and abundantly recompence all our labour.

Were

Were there need of any further motives to excite us to this, I might lay open the many dreadful effects of ſelf-ignorance, and ſhew how plainly it appears to be the original ſpring of all the follies and incongruities we ſee in the characters of men, and of moſt of the mortifications and miſeries they meet with here. This would ſoon appear by only mentioning the reverſe of thoſe advantages before ſpecified, which reſult from ſelf-knowledge. For what is it, but a want of ſelf-knowledge and ſelf-government, that makes us ſo unſettled and volatile in our diſpoſitions? So ſubject to tranſport and exceſs of paſſions in the varying ſcenes of life? ſo raſh and unguarded in our conduct? ſo vain and ſelf-ſufficient? ſo cenſorious and malignant? ſo eager and confident? ſo little uſeful in the world, in compariſon of what we might be? ſo inconſiſtent with ourſelves? ſo miſtaken in our notions of true religion? ſo generally indiſpoſed to, or unengaged in the holy duties of it? and finally, ſo unfit for death, and ſo afraid of dying?—I ſay, to what is all this owing, but ſelf-ignorance? the firſt and fruitful ſource of all this long train of evils:—and indeed there is ſcarce any, but what may be traced up to it. In ſhort, it brutifies man to be ignorant of himſelf. *Man that is in honour, and underſtandeth not* (himſelf eſpecially) *is as the beaſts that periſh*†.

† *Pſal.* xlix. 20.

" Come home then, O my wandering, ſelf-
" neglecting ſoul; loſe not thyſelf in a wilder-
" neſs or tumult of impertinent, vain, diſtract-
" ing things. Thy work is nearer thee; the
" country thou ſhouldſt firſt ſurvey and travel is
" within thee; from which thou muſt paſs to that
" above thee; when by loſing thyſelf in this
" without thee, thou wilt find thyſelf before thou
" art aware in that below thee.—Let the eyes of
" fools be in the corners of the earth; leave it
" to men beſide themſelves, to live as without
" themſelves; do thou keep at home and mind
" thine own buſineſs. Survey thyſelf, thine own
" make and nature, and thou wilt find full em-
" ploy for all thy moſt active thoughts*. But
" doſt thou delight in the myſteries of nature?
" Conſider well the myſtery of thy own. The
" compendium of all thou ſtudieſt is near thee,
" even within thee; thyſelf being the epitome
" of the world *(b)*.—If either neceſſity or duty,
" nature

* Mirantur aliqui altitudines montium, ingentes fluctus maris, altiſſimos lapſus fluminum, et oceani ambitum, et gyros ſyderum, et relinquunt ſeipſos, nec mirantur, ſaith Saint Auguſtin.—Some men admire the heights of mountains, the huge waves of the ſea, the ſteep falls of rivers, the compaſs of the ocean, and the circuit of the ſtars, and paſs by themſelves without admiration.

(b) Τις ȣν αξιως θαυμασειε την ευγενειαν τȣτȣ τȣ ζωȣ τȣ συνδεοντος εν εαυτω τα θνητα τοις αθανατοις, και τα λογικα τοις αλογοις συναπτοντος, τȣ φεροντος εν τη καθ' εαυτον φυσει της πασης κτισεως την εικονα, δι α και μικρος κοσμος ειρηται, τȣ τισαυτης ηξιομενȣ παρα τȣ Θεȣ προνοιας; δι ον παντα και τα νυν, και τα μελλοντα·

" nature or grace, reaſon or faith, internal in-
" ducements, external impulſes, or eternal mo-
" tives, might determine the ſubject of thy ſtudy
" and contemplation, thou wouldſt call home thy
" diſtracted thoughts, and employ them more
" on thyſelf and thy God *(c)*.

Now then let us reſolve, that henceforth the ſtudy of ourſelves ſhall be the buſineſs of our lives; that, by the bleſſing of God, we may arrive at ſuch a degree of ſelf-knowledge, as may ſecure to us the excellent benefits before-mentioned. To which end we ſhould do well to attend diligently to the rules laid down in the following chapters.

CHAP. I.

Self-Examination neceſſary to Self-Knowledge.

I. THE firſt thing neceſſary to ſelf-knowledge is ſelf-inſpection.

We muſt often look into our hearts if we would know them. They are very deceitful;

μελλονλα· δι ον ο Θεος ανθρωπος γεγονε. *Nem. de Nat. Hom. cap.* 1. *pag.* 34. Who can ſufficiently admire the noble nature of that creature man, who hath in him the mortal and the immortal, the rational and irrational natures united, and ſo carries about with him the image of the whole creation; whence he is called Microcoſm, or the little world; for whoſe ſake (ſo highly is he honoured by God) all things are made, both preſent and future; nay, for whoſe ſake God himſelf became man!—So that it was not unjuſtly ſaid by Gregory Neſſene, that man was the Macrocoſm, and the world without the microcoſm.

(c) Baxter's *Miſchief of Self-Ignorance.*

more

more ſo than we can imagine, till we have ſearched and tried, and watched them well. We may meet with frauds and faithleſs dealings from men; but, after all, our own hearts are the greateſt cheats; and there are none we are in greater danger from than ourſelves. We muſt firſt ſuſpect ourſelves, then examine ourſelves, then watch ourſelves, if we expect ever to know ourſelves. How is it poſſible there ſhould be any ſelf-acquaintance without ſelf-converſe?

Were a man to accuſtom himſelf to ſuch ſelf-employment, he need not live till thirty before he ſuſpects himſelf a fool, or till forty before he knows it *(d)*.

Men could never be ſo bad as they are, if they did but take a proper care and ſcope in this buſineſs of ſelf-examination *(e)*. If they did but look backwards to what they were, inwards to what they are, and forwards to what they ſhall be.

And as this is the firſt and moſt neceſſary ſtep to ſelf-acquaintance, it may not be amiſs to be a little more particular in it. Therefore,

(1.) This buſineſs of ſelf-ſcrutiny muſt be performed with great care and diligence, otherwiſe our hearts will deceive us, even whilſt we are examining them. "When we ſet ourſelves

(d) See *the Complaint, or Night-Thoughts, part i. pag.* 28.

(e) Hoc nos peſſimos facit, quod nemo vitam ſuam reſpicit. Quid facturi ſimus, cogitamus, et id raro: quid fecerimus, non cogitamus. *Sen. Epiſt.* 84.

"to

" to think, ſome trifle or other preſently inter-
" rupts and draws us off from any profitable re-
" collection. Nay we ourſelves fly out, and are
" glad to be diverted from a ſevere examination
" into our own ſtate; which is ſure, if diligently
" purſued, to preſent us with objects of ſhame
" and ſorrow, which will wound our ſight,
" and ſoon make us weary of this neceſſary
" work" (*f*).

Do not let us flatter ourſelves then that this is a mighty eaſy buſineſs. Much pains and care are neceſſary ſometimes to keep the mind intent; and more to keep it impartial; and the difficulty of it is the reaſon that ſo many are averſe to it, and care not to deſcend into themſelves (*g*).

Reader, try the experiment; retire now into thyſelf, and ſee if thou canſt not ſtrike out ſome light within, by cloſely urging ſuch queſtions as theſe—" What am I? For what was I made?
" And to what ends have I been preſerved ſo
" long, by the favour of my Maker? Do I re-
" member, or forget thoſe ends? Have I an-
" ſwered or perverted them? — What have I
" been doing ſince I came into the world? What
" is the world or myſelf the better for my living
" ſo many years in it?—what is my allowed

(*f*) Stanhope's Thomas à Kempis, pag. 166.

(*g*) Ut nemo in ſeſe tentat deſcendere! *Perſ. Sat.* 4.

" courſe

" courſe of actions? Am I ſure it will bear the " future teſt?—Am I now in that ſtate I ſhall " wiſh to die in? And, O my ſoul, think, and " think again what it is to die.—Do not put " that moſt awful event far from thee; nor paſs " it by with a ſuperficial thought. Canſt thou " be too well fortified againſt the terrors of " that day! And art thou ſure that the props " which ſupport thee now will not fail thee then? " —What hopes haſt thou for eternity! Haſt " thou indeed that godly temper, which alone " can fit thee for the enjoyment of God?— " Which world art thou moſt concerned for?— " What things do moſt deeply affect thee?— " O my ſoul, remember thy dignity; think how " ſoon the ſcene will ſhift. Why ſhouldſt thou " forget that thou art immortal?"

(2.) This ſelf-excitation and ſcrutiny muſt be frequently made.—They who have a great deal of important buſineſs on their hands ſhould often look over their accounts, and frequently adjuſt them, leſt they ſhould be going backwards, and not know it: and cuſtom will ſoon take off the difficulty of this duty, and make it delightful.

In our morning retreat, it will be proper to remember, that we cannot preſerve throughout the day that calm and even temper we may then be in: that we ſhall very probably meet with

with ſome things to ruffle us; ſome attack on our weak ſide: place a guard there now. Or, however, if no incidents happen to diſcompoſe us, our tempers will vary; our thoughts will flow pretty much with our blood; and the diſpoſitions of the mind be a good deal governed by the motions of the animal ſpirits; our ſouls will be ſerene or cloudy, our tempers volatile or flegmatic, and our inclinations ſober or irregular, according to the briſkneſs or ſluggiſhneſs of the circulation of the animal fluids, whatever may be the natural and immediate cauſe of that; and therefore we muſt reſolve to avoid all occaſions that may raiſe any dangerous ferments there; which, when once raiſed, will excite in us very different thoughts and diſpoſitions from thoſe we now have; which, together with the force of a fair opportunity and urgent temptation, may overſet our reaſon and reſolution, and betray us into thoſe ſinful indulgences which will wound the conſcience, ſtain the ſoul, and create bitter remorſe in our cooler reflections. Pious thoughts and purpoſes in the morning will ſet a guard upon the ſoul, and fortify it under all the temptations of the day.

But ſuch ſelf-inſpection, however, ſhould not fail to make part of our evening devotions: when we ſhould review and examine the ſeveral

ral actions of the day, the various tempers and diſpoſitions we have been in, and the occaſions that excited them. It is an advice worthy of a chriſtian, tho' it firſt dropped from a heathen pen: That before we betake ourſelves to reſt, we review and examine all the paſſages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redreſs what we find to have been amiſs; and make the ſhipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our courſe on another.—A practice that hath been recommended by many of the heathen moraliſts of the greateſt name; as Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus; and particularly Pythagoras, in the verſes that go under his name, and are called his Golden Verſes: wherein he adviſes his ſcholars every night to recollect the paſſages of the day, and aſk themſelves theſe queſtions:- "Wherein have I "tranſgreſſed this day? What have I done? "What duty have I omitted, &c." (*h*)? Seneca recom-

(*h*) Μηδ' υπνον μαλακοισιν επ' ομμασι προσδεξασθαι,
Πριν των ημερινων εργων τρις εκαστον επελθειν·
Πη παρεβην; τι δ' ερεξα; τι μοι δεον ουκ ελελεσται;
Αρξαμενος δ' απο πρωτου, επειθ' και μεταπειρα,
Δειλα μεν εκπρηξας, επιπλησσεο· χρηστα δε τερπου.
Ταυτα πονει, ταυτ' ικμελειτα· τουτων χρη εραν σε·
Ταυτα σε της θειης αρετης εις ιχνεα θησει.
Vid. Pythag. Aur. Carm. apud Poet. Minor. pag. 420.

Let not your eyes the ſweets of ſlumber taſte,
Till you have thrice ſevere reflections paſt
On th'actions of the day, from firſt to laſt.
Wherein have I tranſgreſs'd? what done have I?

What

recommends the ſame practice. 'Sectius,' ſaith he, 'did this; at the cloſe of the day, before 'he betook himſelf to reſt, he addreſſed his 'ſoul in the following manner:' "What "evil of thine haſt thou cured this day? What "vice withſtood? In what reſpect art thou "better?"—'Paſſion will ceaſe, or become more 'cool, when it knows every day it is to be thus 'called to account. What can be more ad-'vantageous than this conſtant cuſtom of ſearch-'ing through the day!——— And the ſame 'courſe,' ſaith Seneca, 'I take myſelf; and eve-'ry day ſit in judgment on myſelf; and at even, 'when all is huſh and ſtill, I make a ſcrutiny 'into the day; look over my words and ac-'tions, and hide nothing from myſelf; conceal 'none of my miſtakes through fear; for why 'ſhould I? When I have it in my power to 'ſay thus: "This once I forgive thee; but 'ſee thou do ſo no more.—In ſuch a diſpute I 'was too keen; do not for the future contend 'with ignorant men; they will not be con-'vinced, becauſe they are unwilling to ſhew "their ignorance.—Such a one I reproved with "too much freedom; whereby I have not re-

What actions unperform'd have I paſt by?
And if your actions ill, on ſearch you find,
Let grief; if good, let joy poſſeſs your mind.
This do, this think, to this your heart incline;
This way will lead you to the life divine.

"formed

" formed, but exaſperated him; remember here-
" after to be more mild in your cenſures; and
" conſider not only whether what you ſay be
" true, but whether the perſon you ſay it to can
" bear to hear the truth *(i)*."—Thus far that excellent moraliſt.

Let us take a few other ſpecimens of a more pious and chriſtian turn, from a judicious and devout writer *(k)*.

'This morning, when I aroſe, inſtead of ap-
'plying myſelf to God in prayer, (which I
'generally find it beſt to do, immediately after
'a few ſerious reflections) I gave way to idle
'muſing, to the great diſorder of my heart
'and frame. How often have I ſuffered for
'want of more watchfulneſs on this occa-
'ſion! When ſhall I be wiſe?—I have this
'day ſhamefully trifled, almoſt through the
'whole of it; was in my bed when I ſhould
'have been upon my knees; prayed but coolly
'in the morning; was ſtrangely off my guard
'in the buſineſs and converſation I was con-
'cerned with in the day, particularly at ——;
'I indulged to very fooliſh, ſinful, vile thoughts,
'&c; I fell in with a ſtrain of converſation
'too common amongſt all ſorts, viz. ſpeaking
'evil of others; taking up a reproach againſt

(i) Vid. Seneca de Ira, lib. 3. *cap.* 36.

(k) M. *Bennet. See his Chriſt. Orator. pag.* 584.

'my

'my neighbour. I have often reſolved againſt this 'ſin, and yet run into it again. How treacher- 'ous this wicked heart of mine! I have loſt ſeve- 'ral hours this day in mere ſauntering and idle- 'neſs.—This day I had an inſtance of mine own 'infirmity, that I was a little ſurpriſed at, and 'I am ſure I ought to be humbled for:—the 'behaviour of ——, from whom I can expect no- 'thing but humour, indiſcretion, and folly, 'ſtrangely ruffled me; and that after I have had 'warning over and over again. What a poor, 'impotent, contemptible creature am I!——— 'This day I have been kept, in a great meaſure, 'from my too frequent failings.—I had this day 'very comfortable aſſiſtances from God, upon an 'occaſion not a little trying——what ſhall I ren- 'der?"——

(3.) See that the mind be in the moſt compoſed and diſengaged frame it can, when you enter upon this buſineſs of ſelf-judgment. Chuſe a time when it is moſt free from paſſion, and moſt at leiſure from the cares and affairs of life. A judge is not like to bring a cauſe to a good iſſue, that is either intoxicated with liquor on the bench, or has his mind diſtracted with other cares, when he ſhould be intent on the trial. Remember you ſit in judgment upon yourſelf, and have nothing to do at preſent but to ſift the evidence which conſcience may bring

in

in, either for or againſt you, in order to pronounce a juſt ſentence; which is of much greater concernment to you at preſent than any thing elſe can be; and therefore it ſhould be tranſacted with the utmoſt care, compoſure, and attention.

(4.) Beware of partiality, and the influence of ſelf-love in this weighty buſineſs; which if you do not guard againſt, it will ſoon lead you into ſelf-deluſion; the conſequences of which may be fatal to you. Labour to ſee yourſelf as you are; and view things in a juſt light, and not in that in which you would have them appear. Remember that the mind is always apt to believe thoſe things which it would have to be true, and backward to credit what it wiſhes to be falſe; and this is an influence you will certainly lie under in this affair of ſelf-judgment.

You need not be much afraid of being too ſevere upon yourſelf. Your great danger will generally be of paſſing a too favourable judgment. A judge ought not indeed to be a party concerned; and ſhould have no intereſt in the perſon he ſits in judgment upon. But this cannot be the caſe here,—as you yourſelf are both judge and criminal; which ſhews the danger of pronouncing a too favourable ſentence. But remember, your buſineſs is only with the evidence and the rule of judgment; and that,

however

however you come off now, there will be a rehearing in another court, where judgment will be according to truth.

'However, look not unequally either at the 'good or evil that is in you; but view them as 'they are. If you obſerve only the good that is 'in you, and overlook the bad, or ſearch only af-'ter your faults, and overlook your graces, nei-'ther of theſe will bring you to a true acquaint-'ance with yourſelf *(l)*.'

And to induce you to this impartiality, remember that this buſineſs (tho' it may be hid from the world) is not done in ſecret; God ſees how you manage it, before whoſe tribunal you muſt expect a righteous judgment. 'We ſhould or-'der our thoughts ſo (ſaith Seneca) as if we had 'a window in our breaſts, thro' which any one 'might ſee what paſſes there. And indeed there 'is one that does; for what does it ſignify that 'our thoughts are hid from men? From God no-'thing is hid *(m)*.'

(5.) Beware of falſe rules of judgment. This is a ſure and common way to ſelf-deception, *e. g.* Some judge of themſelves by what they have been. But it does not follow, if men

(l) Baxter's *Director, pag.* 876.

(m) Sic cogitandum tanquam aliquis in pectus intimum inſpicere poſſit; et poteſt. Quid enim prodeſt ad homine aliquid eſſe ſecretum? Nihil Deo claufum eſt. *Sen. Epiſt.* 84.

* 2 *Cor.* x. 12.

are

are not ſo bad as they have been, that therefore they are as good as they ſhould be. It is wrong to make our paſt conduct implicitly the meaſure of our preſent, or the preſent the rule of our future; when our paſt, preſent, and future conduct muſt be all brought to another rule. And they who thus *meaſure themſelves by themſelves, and compare themſelves with themſelves, are not wiſe**.—Again, others are apt to judge of themſelves by the opinions of men; which is the moſt uncertain rule that can be; for in that very opinion of theirs you may be deceived. How do you know they have really formed ſo good an idea of you as they profeſs? But, if they have, may not others have formed as bad? And why ſhould not the judgment of theſe be your rule, as well as the opinion of thoſe? Appeal to ſelf-flattery for an anſwer.—However, neither one nor the other of them perhaps appear even to know themſelves; and how ſhould they know you? How is it poſſible they ſhould have opportunities of knowing you better than you know yourſelf? A man can never gain a right knowledge of himſelf from the opinion of others which is ſo various, and generally ſo ill-founded; for men commonly judge by outward appearances, or inward prejudice, and therefore, for the moſt part think and ſpeak of us very much at random.

* 2 *Cor.* x. 12.

—Again,

—Again, others are for judging of themſelves by the conduct of their ſuperiors, who have opportunities and advantages of knowing, acting, and being better; 'and yet without vanity be it 'ſpoken (ſay they) we are not behind hand with 'them.' But what then? Neither they nor you perhaps are what the obligations of your character indiſpenſibly require you to be, and what you muſt be ere you can be happy. But conſider how eaſily this argument may be retorted. You are better than ſome, you ſay, who have greater opportunities and advantages of being good than you have; and therefore your ſtate is ſafe. But you yourſelf have greater opportunities and advantages of being good than ſome others have, who are nevertheleſs better than you; and therefore, by the ſame rule, your ſtate cannot be ſafe.—Again, others judge of themſelves by the common maxims of the vulgar world concerning honour and honeſty, virtue and intereſt; which maxims, tho' generally very corrupt and very contrary to thoſe of reaſon, conſcience, and ſcripture, men will follow as a rule, for the ſake of the latitude it allows them: and fondly think, that if they ſtand right in the opinion of the loweſt kind of men, they have no reaſon to be ſevere upon themſelves. Others, whoſe ſentiments are more delicate and refined, they imagine, may be miſtaken, or may overſtrain

the matter. In which perſuaſion they are confirmed, by obſerving how ſeldom the conſciences of the generality of men ſmite them for thoſe things which theſe nice judges condemn as heinous crimes. I need not ſay how falſe and pernicious a rule this is.——Again, others may judge of themſelves and their ſtate, by ſudden impreſſions they have had, or ſtrong impulſes upon their ſpirits, which they attribute to the finger of God; and by which they have been ſo exceedingly affected as to make no doubt but that it was the inſtant of their converſion. But whether it was or no, can never be known but by the conduct of their after-lives.—In like manner, others judge of their good ſtate by their good frames; tho' very rare, it may be, and very tranſient; ſoon paſſing off like a morning cloud, or as the early dew. 'But we ſhould not judge of 'ourſelves by that which is unuſual or extraor-'dinary with us; but by the ordinary tenor and 'drift of our lives. A bad man may ſeem good 'in ſome good mood; and a good man may 'ſeem bad in ſome extraordinary falls; to judge 'of a bad man by his beſt hours, and a good 'man by his worſt, is the way to be deceived 'in them both *(n)*.' And the ſame way may you be deceived in yourſelf.—*Pharaoh*, *Ahab*, *Herod*, and *Felix*, had all of them their ſoftenings,

(n). Baxter's *Direct. pag.* 876.

their

their tranſitory fits of goodneſs; but yet they remain upon record under the blackeſt characters.

Theſe then are all wrong rules of judgment; and to truſt to them or to try ourſelves by them, leads to fatal ſelf-deception. Again,

(6.) In the buſineſs of ſelf-examination you muſt not only take care you do not judge by wrong rules, but that you do not judge wrong by right rules. You muſt endeavour then to be well acquainted with them. The office of a judge is not only to collect the evidence and the circumſtances of facts, but to be well ſkilled in the laws by which thoſe facts are to be examined.

Now the only right rules by which we are to examine, in order to know ourſelves, are reaſon and ſcripture. Some are for ſetting aſide theſe rules, as too ſevere for them; too ſtiff to bend to their perverſeneſs; too ſtraight to meaſure their crooked ways! are againſt reaſon when reaſon is againſt them; decrying it as carnal reaſon: and againſt ſcripture, when ſcripture is againſt them, deſpiſing it as a dead letter. And thus, rather than be convinced they are wrong, they reject the only means that can ſet them right.

And as ſome are for ſetting aſide theſe rules, ſo others are for ſetting them one againſt the

other;—reaſon againſt ſcripture, and ſcripture againſt reaſon: when they are both given us by the God of our natures, not only as perfectly conſiſtent, but as proper to explain and illuſtrate each other, and prevent our miſtaking either; and to be, when taken together (as they always ſhould) the moſt complete and only rule by which to judge both of ourſelves, and every thing belonging to our ſalvation, as reaſonable and fallen creatures.

(1.) Then one part of that rule which God hath given us to judge of ourſelves by, is right reaſon: by which I do not mean the reaſoning of any particular man, which may be very different from the reaſoning of another particular man; and both, it may be, very different from right reaſon; becauſe both may be influenced not ſo much by the reaſon and nature of things, as by partial prepoſſeſſions and the power of paſſions. But by right reaſon, I mean thoſe common principles, which are readily allowed by all who are capable of underſtanding them, and not notoriouſly perverted by the force of prejudice; and which are confirmed by the common conſent of all the ſober and thinking part of mankind; and may be eaſily learned by the light of nature. Therefore, if any doctrine or practice, tho' ſuppoſed to be founded in or countenanced by revelation, be nevertheleſs apparently repugnant

repugnant to theſe dictates of right reaſon, or evidently contradict our natural notions of the divine attributes, or weaken our obligations to univerſal virtue, that we may be ſure is no part of revelation; becauſe then one part of our rule would claſh with and be oppoſite to the other. And thus reaſon was deſigned to be our guard againſt a wild and extravagant conſtruction of ſcripture.

(2.) The other part of our rule is the ſacred ſcriptures, which we are to uſe as our guard againſt the licentious excurſions of fancy, which is often impoſing itſelf upon us for right reaſon. Let any religious ſcheme or notion then appear ever ſo pleaſing or plauſible, if it be not eſtabliſhed on the plain principles of ſcripture, it is forthwith to be diſcarded: and that ſenſe of ſcripture that is violently forced to bend towards it, is very much to be ſuſpected.

It muſt be very ſurpriſing to one who reads and ſtudies the ſacred ſcriptures with a free, unbiaſſed mind, to ſee what elaborate, fine-ſpun flimſy gloſſes men will invent and put upon ſome texts as the true and genuine ſenſe of them; for no other reaſon, but becauſe it is moſt agreeable to the opinion of their party, from which, as the ſtandard of their orthodoxy, they durſt never depart; who, if they were to write a critique in the ſame manner on any Greek or Latin author,

would make themſelves extremely ridiculous in the eyes of the learned world. But, if we would not pervert our rule, we muſt learn to think as ſcripture ſpeaks, and not compel that to ſpeak as we think.

Would we know ourſelves then, we muſt often view ourſelves in the glaſs of God's word. And when we have taken a full ſurvey of ourſelves from thence, let us not ſoon forget *what manner of perſons we are**. If our own image do not pleaſe us, let us not quarrel with our mirror, but ſet about mending ourſelves.

The eye of the mind, indeed, is not like that of the body, which can ſee every thing elſe but itſelf; for the eye of the mind can turn itſelf inward, and ſurvey itſelf. However, it muſt be owned, it can ſee itſelf much better when its own image is reflected upon it from this mirror: and it is by this only that we can come at the bottom of our hearts, and diſcover thoſe ſecret prejudices and carnal prepoſſeſſions, which ſelf-love would hide from us.

This then is the firſt thing we muſt do, in order to ſelf-knowledge. We muſt examine, ſcrutinize, and judge ourſelves, diligently, leiſurely, frequently, and impartially; and that not by the falſe maxims of the world, but by the rules which

* *Jam.* i. 23, 24.

God

God hath given us,—reaſon and ſcripture; and take care to underſtand thoſe rules, and not ſet them at variance.

CHAP. II.

Conſtant Watchfulneſs neceſſary to Self-Knowledge.

II. WOULD we know ourſelves, we muſt be very watchful over our hearts and lives.

(1.) We muſt keep a vigilant eye upon our hearts; *i. e.* our tempers, inclinations, and paſſions. A more neceſſary piece of advice, in order to ſelf-acquaintance, there cannot be, than that which *Solomon* gives us *, *Keep your heart with all diligence*, or (as it is in the original) *above all keeping*. *q. d.* Whatever you neglect or overlook, be ſure you mind your heart (*p*). Narrowly obſerve all its inclinations and averſions, all its motions and affections, together with the ſeveral objects and occaſions which excite them. And this precept we find in ſcripture inforced with two very urgent reaſons. The firſt is, becauſe out of it are the iſſues of life; *i. e.* As our heart is, ſo will the tenor of our life and conduct be. As is the foun-

* *Prov.* iv. 23.

(*p*) Parallel to this advice of the Royal Preacher, is that of the imperial philoſopher, Ενδον βλεπε, ενδον γαρ η πηγη του αγαθου. Look within; for within is the fountain of good. *M. Aurel. lib.* 7. § 59.

tain, ſo are the ſtreams; as is the root, ſo is the fruit *. And the other is, becauſe *it is deceitful above all things* †. And therefore, without a conſtant guard upon it, we ſhall inſenſibly run into many hurtful ſelf-deceptions. To which I may add, that without this careful keeping of the heart, we ſhall never be able to acquire any conſiderable degree of ſelf-acquaintance or ſelf-government.

(2.) To know ourſelves, we muſt watch our life and conduct as well as our hearts; and by this the heart will be better known; as the root is beſt known by the fruit. We muſt attend to the nature and conſequences of every action we are diſpoſed or ſolicited to, before we comply; and conſider how it will appear in a future review. We are apt enough to obſerve and watch the conduct of others: a wiſe man will be as critical and as ſevere upon his own; for indeed we have a great deal more to do with our own conduct than that of other men; as we are to anſwer for our own, but not for theirs. By obſerving the conduct of other men we know them; by carefully obſerving our own, we muſt know ourſelves.

* *Mat.* vii. 18. † *Jer.* xvii. 9.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

We ſhould have ſome Regard to the Opinions of Others concerning us, particularly of our Enemies.

III. WOULD we know ourſelves, we ſhould not altogether neglect the opinion which others may entertain concerning us.

Not that we need be very ſolicitous about the cenſure or applauſe of the world, which are generally very raſh and wrong, and proceed from the particular humours and prepoſſeſſions of men: and he that knows himſelf, will ſoon know how to deſpiſe them both. 'The judgment which 'the world makes of us, is generally of no man-'ner of uſe to us; it adds nothing to our ſouls 'or bodies, nor leſſens any of our miſeries. Let 'us conſtantly follow reaſon (ſays Montaigne) 'and let the public approbation follow us the 'ſame way, if it pleaſes.'

But ſtill, I ſay, a total indifference in this matter is unwiſe *(q)*. We ought not to be intirely inſenſible of the reports of others: no, not to the railings of an enemy; for an enemy

(q) Τὰς δὲ ἀκαίρους καθηγορίας—οὔτε ἀμέτρως δεδοικέναι καὶ τρέμειν οὔτε ἁπλῶς φαῦλον καλόν· ἀλλὰ, χρὴ κἂν ψευδεῖς, τυγχάνωσιν, οὖσαι, κἂν παρὰ τῶν τυχόντων ἡμῖν, ἐπάγωνται, πειρᾶσθαι σβεννύναι ταχέως αὐτάς. *Chryſoſt. de Sacred. l.* 5. c. 4. As to the groundleſs reports that may be raiſed to our diſadvantage, it is not good either too much to fear them, or entirely to deſpiſe them. We ſhould endeavour to ſtifle them, be they ever ſo falſe, or the authors of them ever ſo contemptible.

may ſay ſomething out of ill-will to us, which it may concern us to think of coolly when we are by ourſelves; to examine whether the accuſation be juſt; and what there is in our conduct and temper which may make it appear ſo: and by this means our enemy may do us more good than he intended; and diſcover to us ſomething in our hearts which we did not before advert to. A man that hath no enemies ought to have very faithful friends; and one who hath no ſuch friends, ought to think it no calamity that he hath enemies to be his effectual monitors.——'Our friends (ſays Mr. 'Addiſon) very often flatter us as much as our 'own hearts. They either do not ſee our faults, 'or conceal them from us; or ſoften them by 'their repreſentations, after ſuch a manner that 'we think them too trivial to be taken notice 'of. An adverſary, on the contrary, makes a 'ſtricter ſearch into us, diſcovers every flaw and 'imperfection in our tempers, and though his 'malice may ſet them in too ſtrong a light, it has 'generally ſome ground for what it advances. 'A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an ene-'my inflames his crimes. A wiſe man ſhould 'give a juſt attention to both of them, ſo far 'as it may tend to the improvement of the one, 'and the diminution of the other. Plutarch 'has written an eſſay on the benefits which a

'man

'man may receive from his enemies; and, among 'the good fruits of enmity, mentions this in 'particular, That by the reproaches it casts up-'on us we see the worst side of ourselves, and o-'pen our eyes to several blemishes and defects in 'our lives and conversations, which we should 'not have observed, without the help of such ill-'natured monitors.

'In order likewise to come at a true knowledge 'of ourselves, we should consider, on the other 'hand, how far we may deserve the praises and 'approbations which the world bestow upon us; 'whether the actions they celebrate proceed from 'laudable and worthy motives, and how far we 'are really possessed of the virtues which gain us 'applause amongst those with whom we converse. 'Such a reflection is absolutely necessary, if we 'consider how apt we are either to value or con-'demn ourselves by the opinions of others, and 'to sacrifice the report of our own hearts to the 'judgment of the world (*r*).'

In that treatise of Plutarch here referred to, there are a great many excellent things pertinent to this subject; and therefore I thought it not improper to throw a few extracts out of it into the margin (*s*). It

(*r*) *Spectator, Vol.* vi. *No.* 399.

(*s*) The foolish and inconsiderate spoil the very friendship they are engaged in; but the wise and prudent make good use of the hatred and enmity of men against them.

It is the character of a diſſolute mind, to be entirely inſenſible to all that the world ſays of us: and ſhews ſuch a confidence of ſelf-knowledge, as is uſually a ſure ſign of ſelf-ignorance. The moſt knowing minds are ever leaſt preſumptuous: and true ſelf-knowledge is a ſcience of ſo much depth and difficulty, that a wiſe man would not chuſe to be over-confident that all his notions of himſelf are right, in oppoſition to the judg-

Why ſhould we not take an enemy for our tutor, who will inſtruct us gratis in thoſe things we knew not before? For an enemy ſees and underſtands more in matters relating to us than our friends do, becauſe love is blind; but ſpite, malice, ill-will, wrath, and contempt, talk much, are very inquiſitive, and quick-ſighted.

Our enemy, to gratify his ill-will towards us, acquaints himſelf with the infirmities both of our bodies and minds; ſticks to our faults, and makes his invidious remarks upon them, and ſpreads them abroad by his uncharitable and ill-natured reports. Hence we are taught this uſeful leſſon for the direction and management of our converſation in the world, viz. that we be circumſpect and wary in every thing we ſpeak or do, as if our enemy always ſtood at our elbow, and overlooked our actions.

Thoſe perſons whom that wiſdom hath brought to live ſoberly, which the fear and awe of enemies hath infuſed, are by degrees drawn into a habit of living ſo, and are compoſed and fixed in their obedience to virtue by cuſtom and uſe.

When one aſked Diogenes how he might be avenged of his enemies? he replied, To be yourſelf a good and honeſt man.

Antiſthenes ſpake incomparably well, "that, if a man "would live a ſafe and unblameable life, it was neceſſary that "he ſhould have very ingenuous and faithful friends, or very "bad enemies; becauſe the firſt, by their kind admonitions, "would keep him from ſinning; the latter, by their invectives."

He that hath no friend to give him advice, or reprove him when he does amiſs, muſt bear patiently the rebukes of his enemies, and thereby learn to mend the errors of his ways;

con-

judgment of all mankind; ſome of whom perhaps have better opportunities and advantages of knowing him (at ſome ſeaſons eſpecially) than he has of knowing himſelf; becauſe herein they never look through the ſame falſe medium of ſelf-flattery.

conſidering ſeriouſly the object which theſe ſevere cenſures aim at, and not what he is who makes them:—for he who deſigned the death of Prometheus, the Theſſalian, inſtead of giving him a fatal blow, only opened a ſwelling which he had, which did really ſave his life. Juſt ſo may the harſh reprehenſions of enemies cure ſome diſtempers of the mind, which were before either not known or neglected, though their angry ſpeeches do originally proceed from malice or ill-will.

If any man, with opprobrious language, objects to you crimes you know nothing of, you ought to enquire into the cauſes or reaſons of ſuch falſe accuſations; whereby you may learn to take heed for the future, leſt you ſhould unwarily commit thoſe offences which are unjuſtly imputed to you.

Whenever any thing is ſpoken againſt you that is not true, do not paſs by, or deſpiſe it becauſe it is falſe; but forthwith examine yourſelf, and conſider what you have ſaid or done that may adminiſter a juſt occaſion of reproof.

Nothing can be a greater inſtance of wiſdom and humanity, than for a man to bear ſilently and quietly the follies and revilings of an enemy; taking as much care not to provoke him, as he would to ſail ſafely by a dangerous rock.

It is an eminent piece of humanity, and a manifeſt token of a nature truly generous, to put up with the affronts of an enemy, at a time when you have a fair opportunity to revenge them.

Let us carefully obſerve thoſe good qualities wherein our enemies excel us; and endeavour to excel them, by avoiding what is faulty, and imitating what is excellent in them. *Plut. Mor. Vol.* i. *pag.* 265, *et ſeq.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Frequent Converſe with Superiors a Help to Self-Knowledge.

IV. ANOTHER proper means of ſelf-knowledge is, to converſe as much as you can with thoſe who are your ſuperiors in real excellence.

He that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe *. Their example will not only be your motive to laudable purſuits, but a mirror to your mind; by which you may poſſibly diſcern ſome failings, or deficiencies, or neglects in yourſelf, which before eſcaped you. You will ſee the unreaſonableneſs of your vanity and ſelf-ſufficiency, when you obſerve how much you are ſurpaſſed by others in knowledge and goodneſs. Their proficiency will make your defects the more obvious to yourſelf: and by the luſtre of their virtues you will better ſee the deformity of your vices; your negligence by their diligence; your pride by their humility; your paſſion by their meekneſs; and your folly by their wiſdom.

Examples not only move, but teach and direct, much more effectually than precepts; and ſhew us not only that ſuch virtues may be practiſed, but how; and how lovely they appear when they are. And therefore, if we cannot

* *Prov.* xiii. 20.

have

have them always before our eyes, we ſhould endeavour to have them always in our mind; and eſpecially that of our great Head and Pattern, who hath ſet us a perfect example of the moſt innocent conduct, under the worſt and moſt diſadvantageous circumſtances of human life (*t*).

CHAP. V.

Of cultivating ſuch a Temper as will be the beſt Diſpoſition to Self-Knowledge.

V. IF a man would know himſelf, he muſt with great care cultivate that temper which will beſt diſpoſe him to receive this knowledge.

Now, as there are no greater hindrances to ſelf-knowledge than pride and obſtinacy, ſo there is nothing more helpful to it than humility and an openneſs to conviction.

1. One who is in queſt of ſelf-knowledge, muſt above all things ſeek humility. And how near an affinity there is between theſe two, appears from hence,—that they are both acquired the ſame way. The very means of attaining humility are the propereſt means for attaining ſelf-acquaintance. By keeping an eye every day upon our faults and wants, we become more humble; and by the ſame means we become more

(*t*) Qui pleniſſimè intelligere appetit qualis ſit, tales debet aſpicere qualis non eſt; ut in bonorum formâ, metiatur quantum deformis eſt. *Greg.*

ſelf-

ſelf-intelligent. By conſidering how far we fall ſhort of our rule and our duty, and how vaſtly others exceed us, and eſpecially by a daily and diligent ſtudy of the word of God, we come to have meaner thoughts of ourſelves; and by the very ſame means we come to have a better acquaintance with ourſelves.

A proud man cannot know himſelf. Pride is that beam in the eye of his mind, which renders him quite blind to any blemiſhes there. Hence nothing is a ſurer ſign of ſelf-ignorance than vanity and oſtentation.

Indeed, true ſelf-knowledge and humility are ſo neceſſarily connected, that they depend upon, and mutually beget, each other. A man that knows himſelf, knows the worſt of himſelf, and therefore cannot but be humble; and a humble mind is frequently contemplating its own faults and weakneſſes, which greatly improves it in ſelf-knowledge: ſo that ſelf-acquaintance makes a man humble; and humility gives him ſtill a better acquaintance with himſelf.

(2.) An openneſs to conviction is no leſs neceſſary to ſelf-knowledge than humility.

As nothing is a greater bar to true knowledge than an obſtinate ſtiffneſs in opinion, and a fear to depart from old notions, which (before we were capable of judging, perhaps,) we had long taken up for the truth; ſo nothing is a greater

bar

bar to ſelf-knowledge than a ſtrong averſion to part with thoſe ſentiments of ourſelves which we have been blindly accuſtomed to, and to think worſe of ourſelves than we are wont to do.

And ſuch an unwillingneſs to retract our ſentiments in both caſes proceeds from the ſame cauſe, viz. a reluctance to ſelf-condemnation. For he that takes up a new way of thinking, contrary to that which he hath long received, therein condemns himſelf of having lived in an error; and he that begins to ſee faults in himſelf he never ſaw before, condemns himſelf of having lived in ignorance and ſin. Now this is a moſt ungrateful buſineſs, and what ſelf-flattery can by no means endure.

But ſuch an inflexibility of judgment and hatred of conviction, is a very unhappy and hurtful turn of mind: and a man that is reſolved never to be in the wrong, is in a fair way never to be in the right.

As infallibility is no privilege of the human nature, it is no diminution to a man's good ſenſe or judgment to be found in an error, provided he is willing to retract it. He acts with the ſame freedom and liberty as before, whoever be his monitor; and it is his own good ſenſe and judgment that ſtill guides him; which ſhines to great advantage in thus directing him againſt the bias of vanity and ſelf-opinion: and in thus changing

ing his ſentiments, he only acknowledges that he is not (what no man ever was) incapable of being miſtaken. In ſhort, it is more merit, and an argument of a more excellent mind, for a man freely to retract when he is in the wrong, than to be overbearing and poſitive when he is in the right (*u*).

A man then muſt be willing to know himſelf, before he can know himſelf. He muſt open his eyes, if he deſires to ſee; yield to evidence and conviction, though it be at the expence of his judgment, and to the mortifications of his vanity.

CHAP. VI.

To be ſenſible of our Falſe Knowledge a good Step to Self-Knowledge.

VI. WOULD you know yourſelf, take heed and guard againſt falſe knowledge. See that the light that is within you be not darkneſs; that your favourite and leading principles be right. Search your furniture, and conſider what you have to unlearn; for oftentimes there is as much wiſdom in caſting off ſome

(*u*) Ει τις με ελεγξαι, και παρασησαι μοι, ἁι ουκ ορθως υπολαμβανω ἡ πρασσω, δυναιαι, χαιρων μεθησομαι· ζητω γαρ την αληθειαν υφ' ης ουδεις πωποτε εβλαβη· βλαπτεται δε ο επιμενων επι της κακης απαιης και αγνοιας. *M. Aur. lib.* 6. *ſec.* 21. If any one can convince me that I am wrong in any point of ſentiment or practice, I will alter it with all my heart; for it is truth I ſeek, and that can hurt nobody. It is only perſiſting in error or ignorance that can hurt us.

know-

knowledge which we have, as in acquiring that which we have not: which, perhaps, was what made Themiſtocles reply, when one offered to teach him the art of memory, That he had much rather he would teach him the art of forgetfulneſs.

A ſcholar that hath been all his life collecting books, will find in his library at laſt a great deal of rubbiſh: and, as his taſte alters and his judgment improves, he will throw out a great many as traſh and lumber, which, it may be, he once valued and paid dear for; and replace them with ſuch as are more ſolid and uſeful. Juſt ſo ſhould we deal with our underſtandings; look over the furniture of the mind; ſeparate the chaff from the wheat, which are generally received into it together; and take as much pains to forget what we ought not to have learned, as to retain what we ought not to forget. To read froth and trifles all our life, is the way always to retain a flaſhy and juvenile turn; and only to contemplate our firſt (which is generally our worſt) knowledge, cramps the progreſs of the underſtanding, and makes our ſelf-ſurvey extremely deficient. In ſhort, would we improve the underſtanding to the valuable purpoſes of ſelf-knowledge, we muſt take as much care what books we read as what company we keep.

"The pains we take in books or arts, which

"treat

"treat of things remote from the uſe of life, "is a buſy idleneſs. If I ſtudy (ſays Montaigne) "it is for no other ſcience than what treats of "the knowledge of myſelf, and inſtructs me how "to live and die well (*x*)."

It is a comfortleſs ſpeculation, and a plain proof of the imperfection of the human underſtanding, that, upon a narrow ſcrutiny into our furniture, we obſerve a great many things which we think we know, but do not; and many which we do know, but ought not; that a good deal of the knowledge we have been all our lives collecting, is no better than mere ignorance, and ſome of it worſe; to be ſenſible of which is a very neceſſary ſtep to ſelf-acquaintance (*y*).

CHAP. VII.

Self-Inſpection peculiarly neceſſary upon ſome particular Occaſions.

VII. WOULD you know yourſelf, you muſt very carefully attend to the frame and emotions of your mind under ſome extraordinary incidents.

Some ſudden accidents which befal you when the mind is moſt off its guard, will better diſcover its ſecret turn and prevailing diſpoſition than

(*x*) *Rule of Life, pag.* 82, 90.
(*y*) See *Part.* i. *Chap.* xiii. *fin.*

much

much greater events you are prepared to meet, *e. g.*

(1.) Conſider how you behave under any ſudden affronts or provocations from men. *A fool's wrath is preſently known* *; *i. e.* a fool is preſently known by his wrath.

If your anger be ſoon kindled, it is a ſign that ſecret pride lies lurking in the heart; which, like gunpowder, takes fire at every ſpark of provocation that lights upon it. For whatever may be owing to a natural temper, it is certain that pride is the chief cauſe of frequent and wrathful reſentments. For pride and anger are as nearly allied as humility and meekneſs. *Only by pride cometh contention* †:—and a man would not know what mud lay at the bottom of his heart, if provocation did not ſtir it up.

Athenodorus the philoſopher, by reaſon of his old age, begged leave to retire from the court of Auguſtus; which the emperor granted him; and in his compliments of leave, 'Remember (ſaid he) 'Cæſar, whenever you are angry, you ſay or do 'nothing, before you have diſtinctly repeated to 'yourſelf the four-and-twenty letters of the Al-'phabet.' Whereupon, Cæſar catching him by the hand, 'I have need (ſays he) of your preſence ſtill;' and kept him a year longer *(z)*. This is

* *Prov.* xii. 16. † *Prov.* xiii. 10.
(z) See *Plut. Mor. Vol.* i. *page* 238.

cele-

celebrated by the ancients as a rule of excellent wiſdom. But a chriſtian may preſcribe to himſelf a much wiſer; viz. 'When you are angry, 'anſwer not till you have repeated the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer,—*forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*; 'and our Saviour's comment upon it:—*for if ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your Heavenly Father will alſo forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes* *.

It is a juſt and ſeaſonable thought, that of Marcus Antoninus upon ſuch occaſions: "A "man miſbehaves himſelf towards me,—what is "that to me? The action is his; and the will "that ſets him upon it is his; and therefore let "him look to it. The fault and injury belong "to him, not to me. As for me, I am in the "condition Providence would have me, and am "doing what becomes me *(a)*."

But after all, this amounts only to a philoſophical contempt of injuries; and falls much beneath the dignity of a chriſtian forgiveneſs, to which ſelf-knowledge will happily diſpoſe us: and therefore, in order to judge of our improvements therein, we muſt always take care to ex-

* *Mat.* vi. 14, 15.
(a) Meditat. Book 5. ſec. 25.

amine

amine and obſerve in what manner we are affected in ſuch circumſtances.

(2.) How do you behave under a ſevere and unexpected affliction from the hand of Providence? which is another circumſtance, wherein we have a fair opportunity of coming to a right knowledge of ourſelves.

If there be an habitual diſcontent or impatience lurking within us, this will draw it forth; eſpecially if the affliction be attended with any of thoſe aggravating circumſtances which accumulated that of Job.

Afflictions are often ſent with this intent, to teach us to know ourſelves; and therefore ought to be carefully improved to this purpoſe.

And much of the wiſdom and goodneſs of our Heavenly Father is ſeen by a ſerious and attentive mind, not only in proportioning the degrees of his corrections to his childrens ſtrength, but in adapting the kinds of them to their tempers; afflicting one in one way, another in another, according as he knows they are moſt eaſily wrought upon, and as will be moſt for their advantage; by which means a ſmall affliction of one kind may as deeply affect us, and be of more advantage to us, than a much greater of another.

It is a trite but true obſervation, that a wiſe man receives more benefit from his enemies, than from his friends; from his afflictions, than from

from his mercies; by which means his enemies become in effect his beſt friends, and his afflictions his greateſt mercies. Certain it is, that a man never has an opportunity of taking a more fair and undiſguiſed view of himſelf, than in theſe circumſtances; and therefore, by diligently obſerving in what manner he is affected at ſuch times, he may make an improvement in the true knowledge of himſelf, very much to his future advantage, tho', perhaps, not a little to his preſent mortification: for a ſudden provocation from man, or a ſevere affliction from God, may detect ſomething which lay latent and undiſcovered ſo long at the bottom of his heart, that he never once ſuſpected it to have had any place there. Thus the one excited wrath in the meekeſt man *, and the other paſſion in the moſt penitent †.

By conſidering then in what manner we bear the particular afflictions God is pleaſed to allot us, and what benefit we receive from them, we may come to a very conſiderable acquaintance with ourſelves.

(3.) What is our uſual temper and diſpoſition in a time of peace, proſperity, and pleaſure, when the ſoul is generally moſt unguarded?

This is the warm ſeaſon that nouriſhes and impregnates the ſeeds of vanity, ſelf-confidence, and a ſupercilious contempt of others. If there be

* *Pſal.* cvi. 33. † *Job* iii. 3.

ſuch

ſuch a root of bitterneſs in the heart, it will be very apt to ſhoot forth in the ſunſhine of uninterrupted proſperity; even after the froſt of adverſity had nipped it, and, as we thought, killed it.

Proſperity is a trial as well as adverſity; and is commonly attended with more dangerous temptations: and were the mind but as ſeriouſly diſpoſed to ſelf-reflection, it would have a greater advantage of attaining a true knowledge of itſelf under the former than under the latter: but the unhappineſs of it is, the mind is ſeldom rightly turned for ſuch an employment under thoſe circumſtances. It has ſomething elſe to do; has the concerns of the world to mind; and is too much engaged by the things without it, to advert to thoſe within; and is more diſpoſed to enjoy than examine itſelf. However, it is a very neceſſary ſeaſon for ſelf-examination, and a very proper time to acquire a good degree of ſelf-acquaintance, if rightly improved.

(Laſtly.) How do we behave in bad company? —And that is to be reckoned bad company in which there is no probability of our doing or getting any good, but apparent danger of our doing or getting much harm; I mean, our giving offence to others by an indiſcreet zeal, or incurring guilt to ourſelves by a criminal compliance.

Are we carried down by the torrent of vanity

and vice? Will a flaſh of wit or a brilliant fancy make us excuſe a profane expreſſion? If ſo, we ſhall ſoon come to reliſh it when thus ſeaſoned, and uſe it ourſelves.

This is a time when our zeal and wiſdom, our fortitude and firmneſs, are generally put to the moſt delicate proof; and when we may too often take notice of the unſuſpected eſcapes of folly, fickleneſs, and indiſcretion.

At ſuch ſeaſons as theſe, then, we may often diſcern what lies at the bottom of our hearts, better than we can in the more even and cuſtomary ſcenes of life, when the paſſions are all calm and ſtill. And therefore, would we know ourſelves, we ſhould be very attentive to our frame, temper, diſpoſition, and conduct, upon ſuch occaſions.

CHAP. VIII.

To know ourſelves, we muſt wholly abſtract from External Appearances.

VIII. WOULD you know yourſelf, you muſt, as far as poſſible, get above the influence of exteriors, or a mere outward ſhow.

A man is what his heart is. The knowledge of himſelf is the knowledge of his heart, which is intirely an inward thing; to the knowledge of which then, outward things (ſuch as a man's condition and ſtate in the world) can contribute nothing;

nothing: but, on the other hand, is too often a great bar and hinderance to him in his purſuit of ſelf-knowledge.

(1.) Are your circumſtances in the world eaſy and proſperous, take care you do not judge of yourſelf too favourably on that account.

Theſe things are without you, and therefore can never be the meaſure of what is within; and however the world may reſpect you for them, they do not in the leaſt make you either a wiſer or more valuable man.

In forming a true judgment of yourſelf then, you muſt intirely ſet aſide the conſideration of your eſtate and family,—your wit, beauty, genius, health, &c. which are all but the appendages or trappings of a man: a ſmooth and ſhining varniſh, which may lacker over the baſeſt metal *(b)*.

A man may be a good and happy man without theſe things, and a bad and wretched one with them: nay, he may have all theſe, and be the worſe for them. They are ſo far from being good and excellent in themſelves, that we often ſee Providence beſtows them upon the vileſt of men, and in kindneſs denies them to ſome of the beſt. They are oftentimes the greateſt temptations, and

(b) Si perpendere te voles, ſepone pecuniam, domum, dignitatem, intus te ipſe conſule. *Sen.*

Nam genus, et proavos, et que non fecimus ipſi,
Vix ea noſtra voco. *Ovid. Met. lib.* xiii. 140.

put a man's faith and wiſdom to the moſt dangerous trial.

(2.) Is your condition in life mean and afflicted? Do not judge the worſe of yourſelf for not having thoſe external advantages which others have.

None will think the worſe of you for the want of them, but thoſe who think the better of themſelves for having them: in both which they ſhew a very depraved and perverted judgment. Theſe are (τὰ ἐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) things intirely without us, and out of our power; for which a man is neither the better nor the worſe, but according as he uſes them: and therefore you ought to be as indifferent to them as they are to you. A good man ſhines amiably through all the obſcurity of his low fortune; and a wicked man is a poor little wretch in the midſt of all his grandeur (*c*).

Were we to follow the judgment of the world, we ſhould indeed think otherwiſe of theſe things; and by that miſtake be led into a wrong notion of ourſelves. But we have a better rule to follow; to which, if we adhere, the conſideration of our external condition in life, whatever it be, will have no undue influence on the mind in its ſearch after ſelf-knowledge.

(*c*) Parvus pumilio, licèt in monte conſtiterit; coloſſus magnitudinem ſuam ſervabit, etiamſi ſteterit in puteo. *Sen. Epiſt.* 77.

" Pygmies are Pygmies ſtill, tho' plac'd on Alps;
" And Pyramids are Pyramids in vales. *Night Thoughts.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

The Practice of Self-Knowledge a great Means to promote it.

IX. LET all your ſelf-knowledge be reduced into practice.

The right improvement of that knowledge we have, is the beſt way to attain more.

The great end of ſelf-knowledge is ſelf-government; without which (like all other) it is but a uſeleſs ſpeculation. And as all knowledge is valuable in proportion to its end, ſo this is the moſt excellent, only becauſe the practice of it is of the moſt extenſive uſe.

'Above all other ſubjects (ſays an ancient pious writer) 'ſtudy thine own ſelf.—For no knowledge that terminates in curioſity or ſpeculation 'is comparable to that which is of uſe; and of all 'uſeful knowledge, that is moſt ſo which conſiſts 'in the due care and juſt notions of ourſelves. 'This ſtudy is a debt which every one owes himſelf. Let us not then be ſo laviſh, ſo unjuſt, as 'not to pay this debt; by ſpending ſome part, at 'leaſt, if we cannot all or moſt, of our time and 'care upon that which has the moſt indefeaſible 'claim to it. Govern your paſſions; manage your 'actions with prudence; and where falſe ſteps 'have been made, correct them for the future. 'Let nothing be allowed to grow headſtrong and

'disorderly; but bring all under discipline. Set 'all your faults before your eyes; and pass sen- 'tence upon yourself with the same severity as 'you would do upon another, for whom no par- 'tiality hath biassed your judgment (*d*).'

What will our most exact and diligent self-re-searches avail us, if, after all, we sink into indo-lence and sloth? Or what will it signify to be con-vinced that there is a great deal amiss in our de-portments and dispositions, if we sit still content-edly under that conviction, without taking one step towards a reformation? It will indeed ren-der us but the more guilty in the sight of God. And how sad a thing will it be to have our self-knowledge hereafter rise up in judgment against us! ———

'Examination is in order to correction and 'amendment: we abuse it and ourselves, if 'we rest in the duty without looking farther. 'We are to review our daily walk, that we may 'reform it: and consequently a daily review will 'point out to us the subject and matter of our 'future daily care.' — "This day (saith the christian, upon his review of things at night) "I lost so much time; particularly at —— I "took too great a liberty; particularly in —— "I omitted such an opportunity that might have "been improved to better purpose. I mismana-

(*d*) *St. Bernard's Medit. chap.* 5.

"ged

" ged ſuch a duty — I find ſuch a corruption " often working; my old infirmity —— ſtill " cleaves to me: how eaſily doth this ſin beſet " me! ——Oh! May I be more attentive for " the time to come, more watchful over my " heart; take more heed to my ways! May I " do ſo the next day!" —— 'The knowledge ' of a diſtemper is a good ſtep to a cure; at leaſt, ' it directs to proper methods and applications ' in order to it. Self-acquaintance leads to ' ſelf-reformation. He that at the cloſe of each ' day calls over what is paſt, inſpects himſelf, ' his behaviour and manners, will not fall into ' that ſecurity, and thoſe uncenſured follies that ' are ſo common and ſo dangerous (*e*).'

And it may not be improper, in order to make us ſenſible of, and attentive to ſome of the more ſecret faults and foibles of our tempers, to pen them down at night, according as they appeared during the tranſactions of the day. By which means, we ſhall not only have a more diſtinct view of that part of our character to which we are generally moſt blind, but ſhall be able to diſcover ſome defects and blemiſhes in it, which perhaps we never apprehended before; for the wiles and doublings of the heart are ſometimes ſo hidden and intricate, that it requires the niceſt care and moſt ſteady attention to detect and unfold them.

(*e*) *Bennet's Chriſt. Orat. pag.* 578.

For inſtance: — 'This day I read an au-
'thor, whoſe ſentiments were very different
'from mine, and who expreſſed himſelf with
'much warmth and confidence. It excited
'my ſpleen, I own; and I immediately paſſed
'a ſevere cenſure upon him: ſo that had
'he been preſent, and talked in the ſame ſtrain,
'my ruffled temper would have prompted me
'to uſe harſh and ungrateful language, which
'might have occaſioned a very unchriſtian
'contention. But I now recollect, that tho'
'the author might be miſtaken in thoſe ſen-
'timents (as I ſtill believe he was) yet, by his
'particular circumſtances in life, and the me-
'thod of his education, he hath been ſtrongly led
'into that way of thinking; ſo that his pre-
'judice is pardonable; but my uncharitableneſs
'is not; eſpecially, conſidering that in many
'reſpects he has the aſcendant of me.—This
'proceeded then from uncharitableneſs, which is
'one fault of my temper I have to watch a-
'gainſt; and which I never was before ſo ſenſi-
'ble of as I am now upon this recollection.
'Learn more moderation, and make more al-
'lowances for the miſtaken opinions of others
'for the future; be as charitable to others who
'differ from you, as you deſire they ſhould be
'to you who differ as much from them; for it
'may be, you cannot be more aſſured of being in
'the right than they are.

'Again;

'Again:—This day I found myſelf ſtrongly 'inclined to put in ſomething, by way of a- 'batement, to an excellent character given of an 'abſent perſon, by one of his great admirers. 'It is true, I had the command of myſelf to 'hold my tongue; and it is well I had; for 'the ardour of his zeal would not have admit- 'ted the exception (though I ſtill think that in 'ſome degree it was juſt); which might have 'raiſed a wrangling debate about his character, 'perhaps at the expence of my own, or, how- 'ever, occaſioned much animoſity and conten- 'tion.——But I have ſince examined the 'ſecret ſpring of that impulſe, and find it to be 'envy; which I was not then ſenſible of; but 'my antagoniſt had certainly imputed it to this: 'and had he taken the liberty to have told me 'ſo, I much queſtion whether I ſhould have had 'the temper of the philoſopher; who, when 'he was really injured, being aſked whether he 'was angry or no? replied, No; but I am conſi- 'dering with myſelf whether I ought not to be ſo. '—I doubt I ſhould not have had ſo much com- 'poſure; but ſhould have immediately reſented 'it as a falſe and malicious aſperſion. But it 'was certainly envy, and nothing elſe; for the 'perſon who was the object of the encomium, 'was much my ſuperior in many reſpects: and 'the exception that aroſe to my mind was the

'only flaw in his character; which nothing but
'a quick-ſighted envy could deſcry. Take heed
'then of that vice for the future.

'Again:—This day I was much ſurprized to
'obſerve in myſelf the ſymptoms of a vice,
'which, of all others, I ever thought myſelf
'moſt clear of; and have always expreſſed the
'greateſt deteſtation of in others, and that is
'Covetouſneſs. For what elſe could it be that
'prompted me to with-hold my charity from
'my fellow-creature in diſtreſs, on pretence
'that he was not in every reſpect a proper
'object; or to diſpenſe it ſo ſparingly to ano-
'ther, who I knew was ſo, on pretence of
'having lately been at a conſiderable expence
'upon another occaſion? This could proceed
'from nothing elſe but a latent principle of
'covetouſneſs; which, tho' I never before ob-
'ſerved in myſelf, yet it is likely others have.
'O how inſcrutable are the depths and deceits
'of the human heart!——Had my enemy
'brought againſt me a charge of indolence,
'ſelf-indulgence, or pride, and impatience, or
'a too quick reſentment of affronts and in-
'juries, my own heart muſt have confirmed
'the accuſation, and forced me to plead guilty.
'Had he charged me with bigotry, ſelf-opi-
'nion, and cenſoriouſneſs, I ſhould have thought
'it proceeded from the ſame temper in him-
'ſelf,

'ſelf, having rarely obſerved any thing like 'it in my own. But had he charged me with 'covetouſneſs, I ſhould have taken it for down-'right calumny, and deſpiſed the cenſure with 'indignation and triumph:—and yet, after all, 'I find it had been but too true a charge.—— 'O! how hard a thing is it to know myſelf! '—This, like all other knowledge, the more 'I have of it, the more ſenſible I am of my want 'of it *.'

The difficulty of ſelf-government and ſelf-poſſeſſion ariſes from the difficulty of a thorough ſelf-acquaintance, which is neceſſary to it. I ſay a thorough ſelf-acquaintance, ſuch as has been already ſet forth in its ſeveral branches, Part I; for as ſelf-government is ſimply impoſſible (I mean conſidered as a virtue) where ſelf-ignorance prevails, ſo the difficulty of it will decreaſe in

* Cicero was, without doubt, the vaineſt man in life, or he never could have had the face to beſeech Cocceius, in writing the Roman Hiſtory, to ſet the adminiſtrations of his conſulſhip in the moſt diſtinguiſhed point of glory, even at the expence of hiſtorical truth; and yet when he is begging a favour of the like kind, even of Cato himſelf, he has theſe aſtoniſhing words: —Si quiſquam fuit unquam remotus et naturâ et magis etiam (ut mihi quidem ſentire videor) ratione atque doctrina ab *inani laude et ſermonibus vulgi*, ego profecto is ſum. lib. 15. Ep. 4. If ever any man was a *ſtranger to vain glory*, and the deſire of popular applauſe, it is myſelf: and this diſpoſition, which I have by nature, is, methinks, grown yet ſtronger by reaſon and philoſophy.—Ah! how ſecretly doth ſelf-ignorance (not only inſinuate into, but) conceal itſelf within the moſt improved and beſt cultivated minds!——Reader, beware.

pro-

proportion to the degree in which ſelf-acquaintance improves.

Many, perhaps, may be ready to think this a paradox; and imagine that they know their predominant paſſions and foibles very well, but ſtill find it extremely difficult to correct them. But let them examine this point again, and perhaps they may find, that *that* difficulty ariſes either from their defect of ſelf-knowledge (for it is in this as in other kinds of knowledge, wherein ſome are very ready to think themſelves much greater proficients than they are) or elſe from their neglect to put in practice that degree of ſelf-knowledge they have. They know their particular failings, yet will not guard againſt the immediate temptations to them: and they are often betrayed into the immediate temptations which overcome them, becauſe they are ignorant of, or do not guard againſt, the more remote temptations, which lead them into thoſe that are more immediate and dangerous, which may not improperly be called the temptations to temptations; in obſerving and guarding againſt which, conſiſts a very neceſſary part of ſelf-knowledge, and the great art of keeping clear of danger, which, in our preſent ſtate of frailty, is the beſt means of keeping clear of ſin.

To correct what is amiſs, and to improve what is good in us, is ſuppoſed to be our hearty

deſire,

deſire, and the great end of all our ſelf-reſearch. But if we do not endeavour after this, all our labour after ſelf-knowledge will be in vain: nay, if we do not endeavour it, we cannot be ſaid heartily to deſire it. 'For there 'is moſt of the heart where there is moſt of 'the will; and there is moſt of the will 'where there is moſt endeavour; and where 'there is moſt endeavour there is generally moſt 'ſucceſs: ſo that endeavour muſt prove the truth 'of our deſire, and ſucceſs will generally prove 'the ſincerity of our endeavour *(f)*.' This, I think, we may ſafely ſay, without attributing too much to the power of the human will, conſidering that we are rational and free agents, and conſidering what effectual aſſiſtance is offered to them who ſeek it, to render their endeavours ſucceſsful if they are ſincere:—which introduces the ſubject of the following chapter.

CHAP. X.

Fervent and frequent Prayer the moſt effectual Means for attaining true Self-Knowledge.

LASTLY, the laſt means to ſelf-knowledge which I ſhall mention is, frequent and devout applications to the Fountain of light, and the Father of our ſpirits, to aſſiſt us in this important ſtudy, and give us the true knowledge of ourſelves,

(f) Baxter.

This

This I mention laſt, not as the leaſt, but, on the contrary, as the greateſt and beſt means of all, to attain a right and thorough knowledge of ourſelves, and the way to render all the reſt effectual: and, therefore, though it be the laſt means mentioned, it is the firſt that ſhould be uſed.

Would we know ourſelves, we muſt often converſe not only with ourſelves in meditation, but with God in prayer:—in the loweſt proſtration of ſoul, beſeeching the Father of our ſpirits to diſcover them to us; in whoſe light we may ſee light, where before there was nothing but darkneſs: to make known to us the depth and devices of our heart; for, without the grace and influence of his divine illuminations and inſtructions, our hearts will, after all our care and pains to know them, moſt certainly deceive us: and ſelf-love will ſo prejudice the underſtanding, as to keep us ſtill in ſelf-ignorance.

The firſt thing we are to do in order to ſelf-knowledge is, to aſſure ourſelves that our hearts are deceitful above all things: and the next is, to remember that *the Lord ſearcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins**, *i. e.* that He, the (Καρδιογνώστης) *Searcher of all hearts* †, hath a perfect knowledge of them, deceitful as they are.—

* *Jer.* xvii. 10. † *Chron.* xxviii. 9.

Which

Which conſideration, as it ſuggeſteth to us the ſtrongeſt motive to induce us to labour after a true knowledge of them ourſelves, ſo it directs us at the ſame time how we may attain this knowledge; viz. by a humble and importunate application to him, to whom alone they are known, to make them known to us. And this, by the free and near acceſs which his holy ſpirit hath to our ſpirits, he can effectually do various ways; viz. by fixing our attentions; by quickening our apprehenſions; removing our prejudices (which, like a falſe medium before the eye of the mind, prevents its ſeeing things in a juſt and proper light); by mortifying our pride; ſtrengthening the intellective and reflecting faculties; and enforcing upon the mind a lively ſenſe and knowledge of its greateſt happineſs and duty; and ſo awakening the ſoul from that carnal ſecurity and indifference about its beſt intereſts, into which a too ſerious attention to the world is apt to betray it.

Beſides, prayer is a very proper expedient for attaining ſelf-knowledge, as the actual engagement of the mind in this devotional exerciſe is in itſelf a great help to it;—forthe mind is never in a better frame than when it is intently and devoutly engaged in this duty: it has then the beſt apprehenſions of God, the trueſt notions of itſelf, and the juſteſt ſentiments

timents of earthly things; the cleareſt conceptions of its own weakneſs, and the deepeſt ſenſe of its own vileneſs; and conſequently is in the beſt diſpoſition that can be, to receive a true and right knowledge of itſelf.

And, Oh! could we but always think of ourſelves in ſuch a manner, or could we but always be in a diſpoſition to think of ourſelves in ſuch a manner, as we ſometimes do in the fervour of our humiliations before the throne of grace, how great a progreſs ſhould we ſoon make in this important ſcience!—which evidently ſhews the neceſſity of ſuch devout and humble engagements of the ſoul, and how happy a means they are to attain a juſt ſelf-acquaintance.

AND NOW, Reader, whoever thou art that has taken the pains to peruſe theſe ſheets, whatever be thy circumſtances or condition in the world, whatever thy capacity or underſtanding, whatever thy occupations and engagements, whatever thy favourite ſentiments and principles, or whatever religious ſect or party thou eſpouſeſt, know for certain, that thou haſt been deeply intereſted in what thou haſt been reading, whether thou haſt attended to it or no;—for it is of no leſs concern to thee than the ſecurity of thy peace, and

uſeful-

uſefulneſs in this world, and thy happineſs in another; and relates to all thy intereſts, both as a man and a chriſtian.———Perhaps thou haſt ſeen ſomething of thine own image in the glaſs that has now been held up to thee. And wilt thou go away, and ſoon forget what manner of perſon thou art?——Perhaps, thou haſt met with ſome things thou doſt not well underſtand or approve. But ſhall that take off thine attention from thoſe things thou doſt underſtand and approve, and art convinced of the neceſſity of?——If thou haſt received no improvement, no benefit from this plain practical Treatiſe thou haſt now peruſed, read it over again; the ſame thought, you know, often impreſſes one more at one time than another; and we ſometimes receive more knowledge and profit by the ſecond peruſal of a book than by the firſt: and I would fain hope that thou wilt find ſomething in this that may ſet thy thoughts on work, and which, by the bleſſing of God, may make thee more obſervant of thy heart and conduct; and, in conſequence of that, a more ſolid, ſerious, wiſe, eſtabliſhed chriſtian.

But will you, after all, deal by this book you have now read, as you have dealt by many ſermons you have heard? Paſs your judgment upon it according to your received and eſtabliſhed ſet of notions; and condemn or applaud it, only

only as it is agreeable or disagreeable to them; and commend or censure it, only as it suits or does not suit your particular taste; without attending to the real weight, importance, and necessity of the subject abstracted from those views? or will you be barely content with the entertainment and satisfaction which some parts of it may possibly have given you, to assent to the importance of the subject, the justness of the sentiment, or the propriety of some of the observations you have been reading, and so dismiss all without any further concern about the matter? —— Believe it, O christian reader, if this be all the advantage you gain by it, it were scarce worth while to have confined yourself so long to the perusal of it. It has aimed, it has sincerely aimed, to do you a much greater benefit; to bring you to a better acquaintance with one you express a particular regard for, and who is capable of being the best friend, or the worst enemy, you have in the world; and that is yourself.—— It was designed to convince you, that would you live and act consistently, either as a man or a christian, you must know yourself; and to persuade you, under the influence of the foregoing motives, and by the help of the fore-mentioned directions, to make self-knowledge the great study, and self-government the great business of your life. In which resolution may Almighty God

God confirm you; and in which great buſineſs may his grace aſſiſt you againſt all future diſcouragements and diſtractions!—With Him I leave the ſucceſs of the whole; to whom be glory and praiſe for ever.

FINIS.

1
58
SEP